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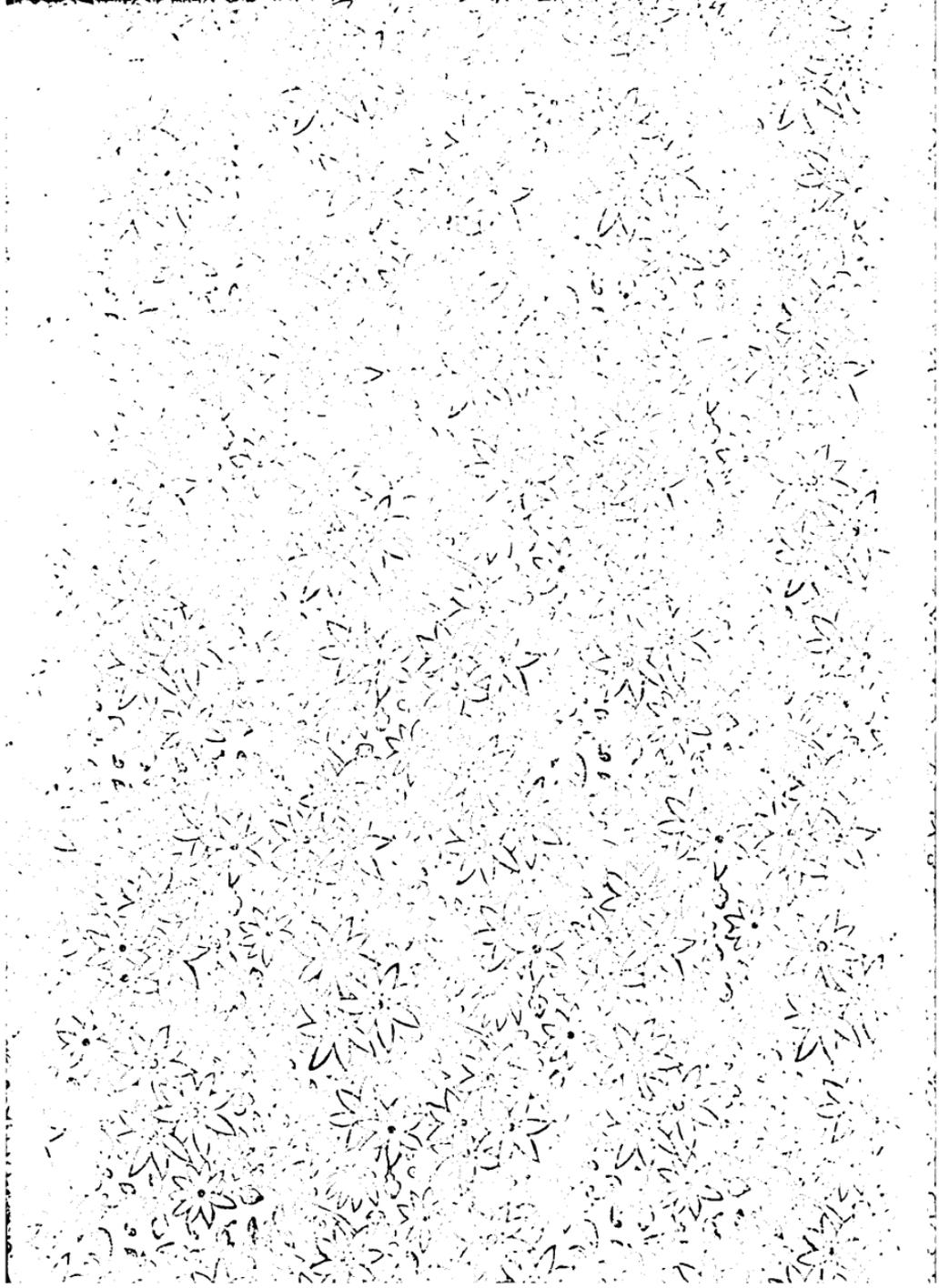
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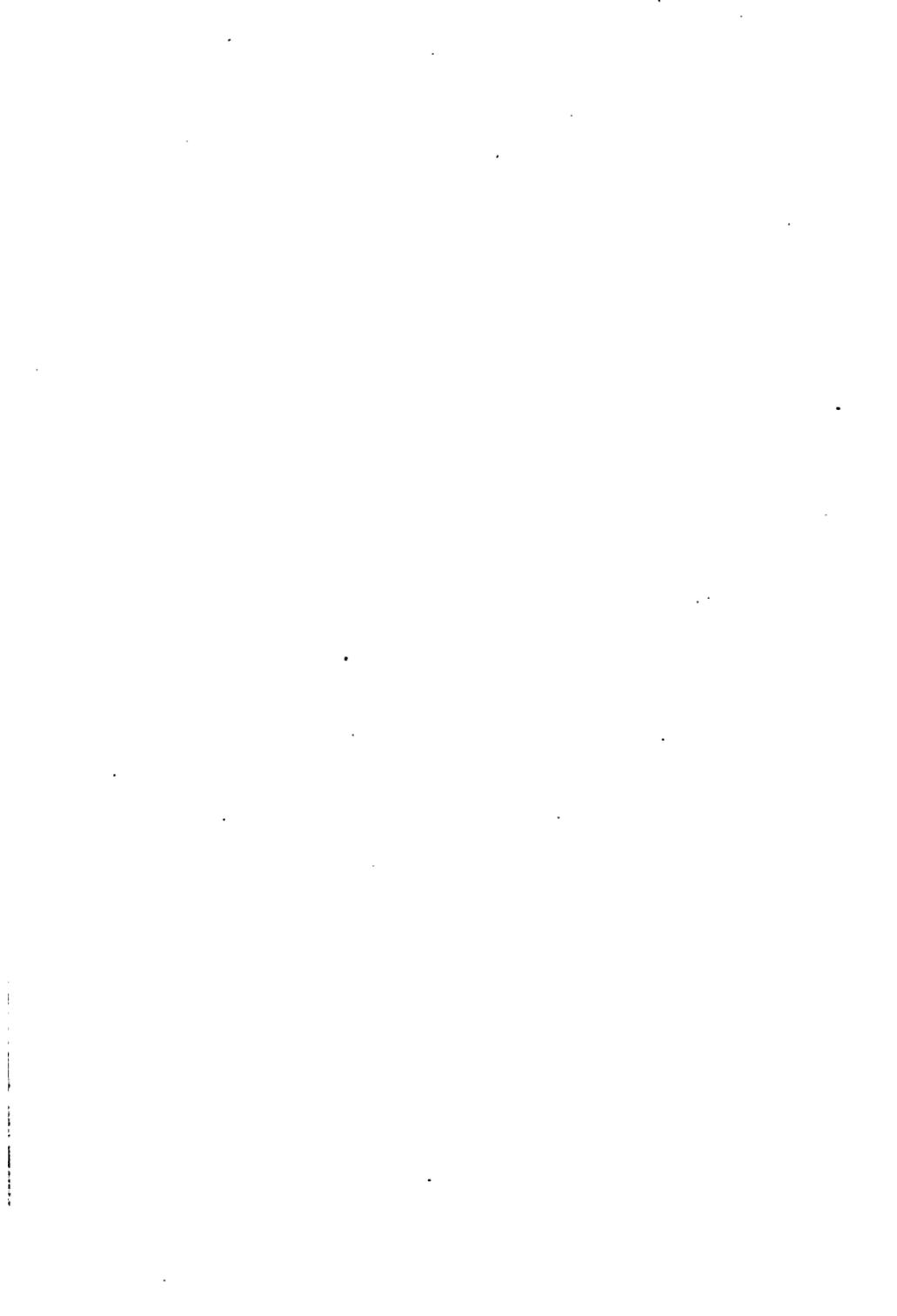
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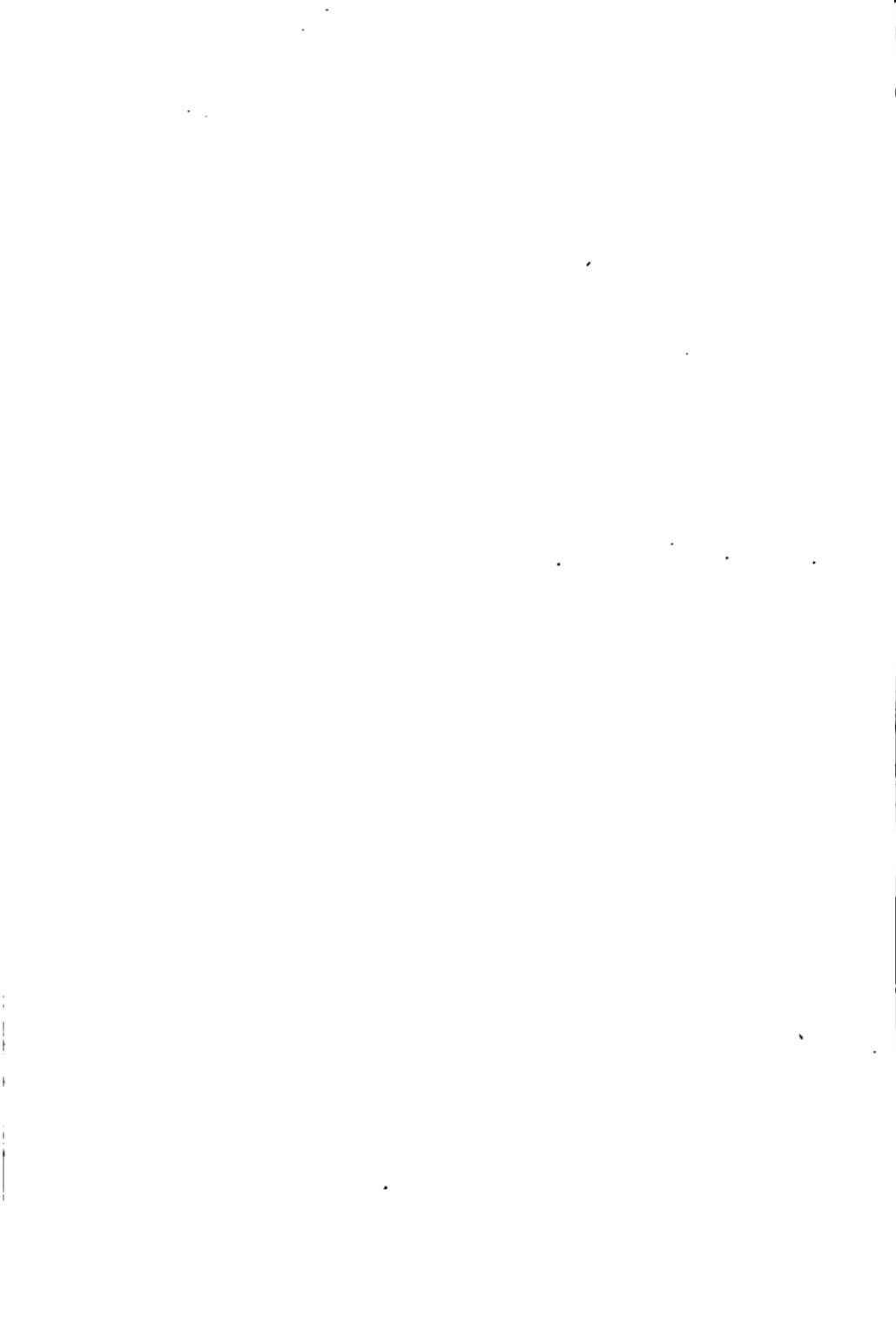
JOHN M. ASHLEY







*THE PULPIT LECTIONARY.*



**The**  
**Pulpit Lctionary,**  
BEING  
FIFTY-FIVE  
SHORT SERMON NOTES  
UPON THE  
OLD TESTAMENT SUNDAY LESSONS.

*PART I.*

ADVENT TO QUINQUAGESIMA.

BY  
JOHN M. <sup>AKS</sup>ASHLEY, B.C.L.,

VICAR OF FEWSTON.

AUTHOR OF "THE PROMPTUARY FOR PREACHERS," "A YEAR WITH  
GREAT PREACHERS," ETC.

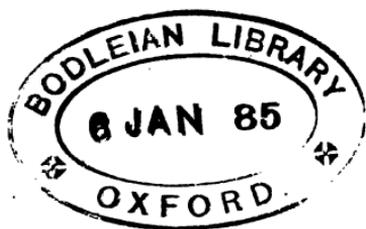
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# Dedication.

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To

My Two Sons,

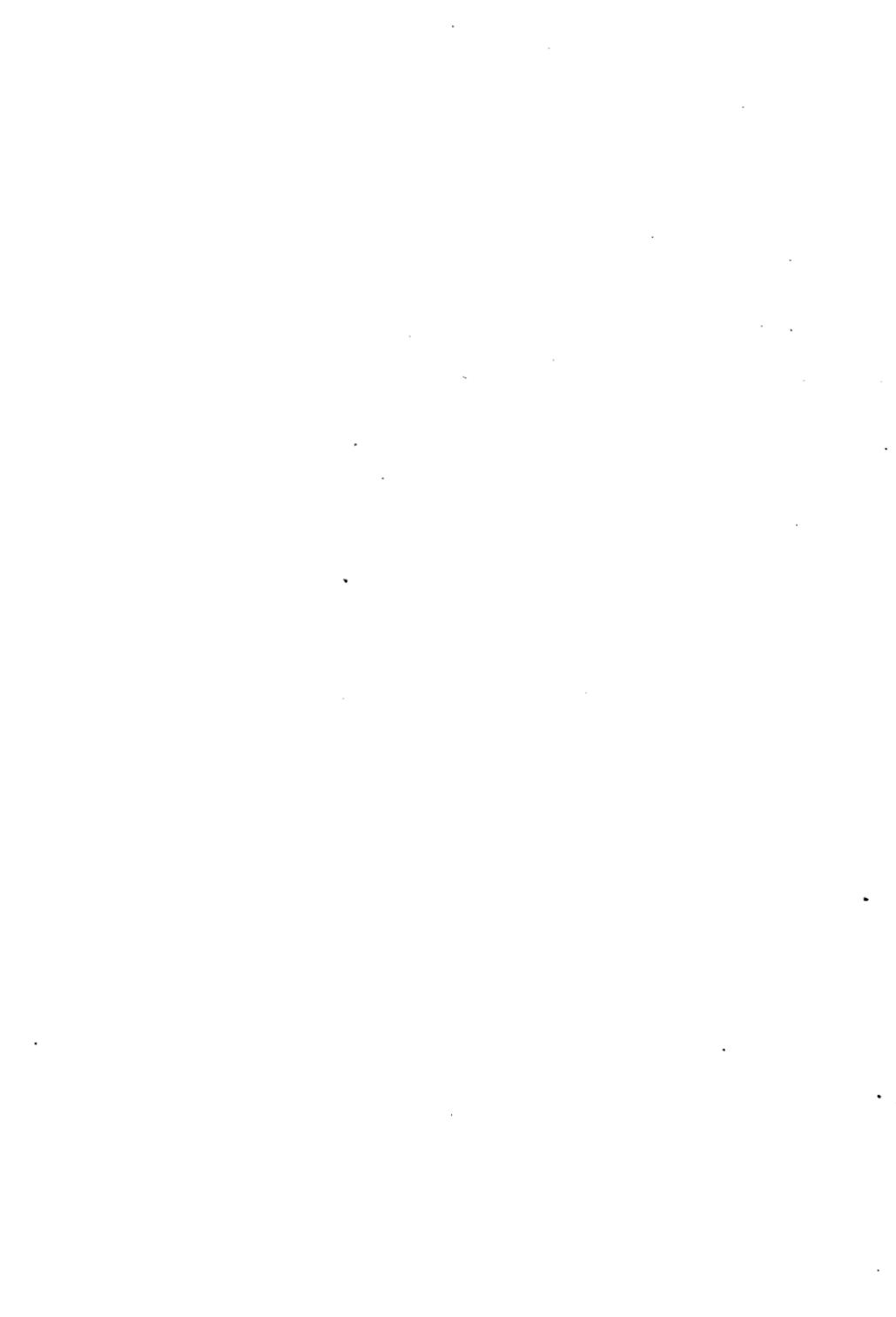
CYRIL AND ANSELM,

CHORISTERS OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE,

OXFORD,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,

WITH ALL A FATHER'S LOVE.



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## Preface.

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VERY soon after the appearance of the "Promptuary for Preachers" the editor received numerous letters from clergymen representing many different schools of thought, asking him to prepare a like pulpit help upon the Sunday Proper Lessons.

The first, the present series, consisting of fifty-five Short Sermon Notes, is his answer to that appeal.

The Notes, as it can easily be seen, are constructed upon a very simple plan. The leading Fathers of the Church were consulted for any hint, or commentary which they might contain upon the Lesson in question; and if they failed to supply the thought upon which a useful sermon could be based, recourse was then had to some one of the great mediæval or post-mediæval preachers to fill up the deficiency. The selection of the passages so obtained forms not the least important part of the work.

The selected quotation is transcribed in full, at the commencement of the sermon, in order that each person using the book might turn it to the account which best corresponds with his own course of reading, or habit of thought.

In the next place three or four self-evident deductions were drawn from the passage in question, which might serve as heads or divisions for the foundation of the sermon which it was purposed to construct upon it. These divisions were made after the method adopted by Vincent Hondry in his "*Bibliotheca Concionatoria*." These divisions again, after the manner of the mediæval writers, were slightly expanded for the benefit of those who might desire to avail themselves

of a larger measure of help. For his own use, in his country parish, the writer has generally found one, or at most two, out of the four divisions afforded him sufficient material for one sermon.

It must be remembered that the following pages are not to be considered so much in the light of "Skeleton Sermons" as of **SERMON THOUGHTS**—not to be looked upon as a frame-work, to be clothed with flesh and blood, but rather to be counted as germs of thought, the expansion and detail of which it is left to each preacher to supply for himself. They are, moreover, very plain and simple, and void of all pretension, their aim being to condense the largest amount of matter, in the smallest possible space. It is for this reason, that as a rule, the references to Holy Scripture have been omitted. The Concordance will easily supply this want.

Should this little book be so fortunate as to count amongst its readers, anyone who has been accustomed to construct his sermons upon "The Moral Concordances" of S. Antony of Padua, he will find in the following pages that much more help is here afforded to him than the bare text of the "Moral Concordances" supplies; and such a reader will the more readily enter into, and appreciate the lines upon which these thoughts have been put together.

Some of the best modern editions of Classical writers are for school use, enriched with divers "short construes," which suggest much in a small compass, and considerably lighten the labour of "getting up" the text. The expansions of the divisions of these notes form a kind of "short construe," which it is hoped may be found to be of no small help to the "getting up" of the required sermon.

Let this suffice as to the manner of the book.

The primary matter, which forms the introduction to each Sermon Note is taken, as before observed, from a variety of sources, all of which are specified in their proper places, and most of which are drawn from well-known and established ecclesiastical writers. Ex-

ception has been made in favour of a few post-mediæval preachers of mark who were highly esteemed in their day, and whose sermons in their Latin dress have been preserved to our present age.

That which may be called the original portion of the book is the result of fairly close reading, and of much continuous preaching, which has extended over more than a quarter of a century. The opinions expressed therein, whether they be right or wrong, represent the matured convictions of the writer's mind. They are hardly to be called dogmatic, for with controversy in any shape, their author has but small sympathy. They are subjective rather than objective; the inward workings of the soul are more dwelt upon than the outward and historical structure of the faith. Yet no pains have been spared to render the notes both catholic and liberal in their tone, and they are written for those who are contented to walk along the "old paths" of catholic tradition; upon the vast resources of which, stored up as they are in the Treasury of the the Church, the writer has drawn with no unloving and irreverential spirit.

With the disciples of "Rational Godliness" the writer has neither part, nor lot; but with those who are seeking in faith and prayer to return to these "old paths;" in spite of its many imperfections, it is trusted that this book may find some measure of favor.

Lastly, the composition of this little book suggested to the writer the similitude of the work which is carried on in a quarry. Should the reader have chanced to have visited a stone quarry, when the men therein were in full employment, he would be led to notice firstly the large masses of rock lying *in situ*, with their planes of cleavage all exposed, and these may be said to represent the folios of the ecclesiastical writers in the author's workshop. Secondly, he marks a few detached blocks of stone, round which the men are talking and debating as to their probable use, such may stand for patristic quotations with which each of the sermon thoughts opens; the men's opinions upon the block being the rough deductions which

are drawn from the passage in question. Thirdly, he will see other, smaller stones, more or less dressed, which correspond with the Indicia, which are woven into the latter part of the text.

These thoughts then may be likened to several stones quarried from the rock of the Treasury of the Church ; stones which are to be removed, re-dressed, re-set, to be used in various places, by various persons ; used, we would humbly and prayerfully trust, in the building up of that spiritual temple, the true stones of which are living souls (1 Pet. ii. 5) ; of the living temple of the Church of God, in which Jesus Christ is ever worshipped, and to whom a living sacrifice is ever offered therein.

May these thoughts prove a help and a blessing to many, so " that the name of Jesus may be glorified " (2 Thess. i. 12) in their prayerful use ; tending in all things to His honour, and to the advancement of His Holy Church.

LAUS DEO.

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## SERMON I.

(First Sunday in Advent.)

Morning Lesson.

### GRATITUDE.

ISAIAH I. 2.

“I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.”

*Introduction.*—God willed that His prophet should mention the sin of ingratitude before the others which the Jews had committed. This is the only sin that he mentions by name, for ingratitude is the source of all the other sins, and contains the rest. In the bitterest words does the prophet complain, calling upon heaven and earth to witness. (Hou. Bib. T. ii., p. 615.) “The best guardian of blessings is the memory of the blessings themselves, and a perpetual confession of thanksgiving.” (S. Chrysost. Hom. xxv. super Matth.) Just as ingratitude poisons both life and action, so does gratitude soften the heart, and lighten the life, making all God’s infinite blessings of creation, providence, and grace, to be—

1. *Known*—and recognised ; we are apt to forget blessings. Mercies unthankfully received are unnoticed ; they are passed by without recognition ; they are accepted

without a thought, either of themselves, or of their giver. The grateful heart sees all the mercies of daily life, and traces them up to their true source. The observation of blessings which flows from a grateful spirit is (*a*) Minute, nothing escapes it, and it regards small things as well as great, as so many tokens of God's loving providence ; (*b*) Searching, and finding every day, some new and fresh mark of God's favour ; (*c*) Continual, adding the experience of one day to that of another. Gratitude quickens both sense and sight.

- II. *Valued*—so as to have a proper store set by them. This is the case with health after sickness ; after the deprivation of some bodily sense, how great is its value when restored to our use. We set a true value upon God's mercies, after they have been withdrawn from us for a time—a value, which gratitude has taught us to assign to them. Gratitude teaches us to value them (*a*) Jealously ; (*b*) Justly ; (*c*) Thankfully.
- III. *Used*—rightly, to God's glory, and to man's benefit. Things rightly valued cannot but be used rightly ; and the right use of a thing consists in (*a*) Abstaining from its abuse ; (*b*) Turning it to its best account ; (*c*) Communicating it as far as possible to others.

iv. *Increased*—being tendered, and nurtured. God's blessings will grow with our gratitude for them. (S. Matt. xxv. 23.) Yea, the Lord shall increase His blessing.

*Indicia.*—I. The loving heart is ever keenly sensitive, it is alive to every token of the heavenly Father's love and care, and love is the source of all gratitude. (S. T. Aquin. Summa 22<sup>o</sup>. q. 107, 3. 3<sup>m</sup>.) For the debt of gratitude is derived from the debt of love, from which no one should desire to be free. When this debt is not paid, it is because there is a defect in love. The unloving and the ungrateful alike deny the benefit when it is granted.

II. Hardness of heart is another source of ingratitude. The nine Jewish lepers of old did not return "to give glory to God" (S. Luke xvii. 18), they "Fell into thankless forgetfulness, which shows that Israel was hard of heart, and so, utterly unthankful." (S. Cyril. Alex. in loco.)

III. Gratitude brings a certain dowry with it—"Be thou grateful for a small benefit and thou wilt be worthy to receive a greater one;" (De Imit. Cht. ii. c. 10), so faithful over a few things as to become a ruler over many.

iv. Gratitude contains within itself a certain payment, which lightens the obligation of the favor conferred. "The first requital of a benefit is to remember it" (Seneca).

v. Do we want to preserve the blessings and mercies which God has granted to us? Then we must remember that "the best guardian of benefits is the memory of themselves, and the continual giving of thanks." (S. Chrysost. In Matt.)

vi. Eucharistia is the Greek equivalent for gratitude ; at the Sacrament of the Altar we make our solemn act of gratitude.

*Epilogue.*—We learn our lesson from the ingratitude of the Jews, and the punishment which it brought to them.

---

## SERMON II.

(**First Sunday in Advent.**)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE VEILED SOUL.

ISAIAH I. I.

"The Vision of Isaiah."

*Introduction.*—"This 'vision' is a revelation, and is as if the removing of a veil, which is manifold, of (1) Ceremonial obscurity (2 Cor. iii. 14), (2) Unbelief (2 Cor. iii. 15), (3) The understanding (S. Luke ix. 45) 'hid,' is veiled. (4) Present distress (Heb. vi. 18, 19), (5) Sacramental Faith (Heb. x. 19, 20), (6) Trusting security (Ps. lxi. 4.)" (S. Bernardine of Sienna. Tom. v. p. 2.)

That which ophthalmia does to the natural eye, this, do the soul's veils to the eye of Faith. The difference of condition, whether veiled or unveiled, marks the difference between a clear and an imperfect vision, whether for the body or the soul.

The veils, which were removed in Isaiah's "vision,"

1. *Darken*—prevent, the clear, pure light of truth being seen. Some light shines in upon the soul, but it is an imperfect light. It is not blindness, but it is not clearness of vision. Sin, as a rule, does not blind, but it obscures and darkens the understanding. Clearness of the mental vision is much to be sought after. It matters not so much whether our range be narrow or wide, so that what we do see, we see *clearly*. We have too much, far too much, of haziness in our views of the most important questions of life; haziness as to the Way of Salvation, the office of the Church and the Christian Priesthood; haziness as to the principles of our civil government, and as to the relative importance of our several duties in life. Some men live long, and never see any one truth really clearly from their cradles to their graves. Seek for an unveiled and an un-darkened vision, which is (a) Clear; (b) Full; (c) Plain.

- II. *Distort*—The shape, proportion, and relative distances of objects. As if by maze and fog, so the veil alters the relative proportions and positions and forms of things. It makes things which are near appear to be far off; it separates things, thoughts, duties, etc., which lie very close together; it alters the form and character of the objects themselves, and thus it deceives as to their real value.
- III. *Weaken*—the perceptive and other powers of the soul.
- IV. *Hinder* progress, stay the souls advance, making it fearful of going wrong. Weakening the mental sight, it makes the soul's progress to become (a) Slow; (b) Halting; (c) Uncertain. Without clearness of sight, is lost clearness of aim, and without clearness of aim, the one definite, guiding, main impulse of life is taken away.

*Indicia.*—I. In things spiritual, faith purges the eye of the soul, that it may see clearly and truly, the whole eye being full of light. Unbelief not to the Jew alone, but to every nation, acts as the veil which hides the full glory of revelation. "We," says Theodoret, "do not need a veil as Moses did. For we speak to the faithful, and all we who believe rejoice in the brightness of the intellectual light."

- II. "Vision may be divided into three kinds. Bodily

vision, by which the eye sees outward objects ; spiritual, when the memory brings before us past scenes, or stores up present things for future use ; intellectual, which enables us to distinguish between, and to apprehend the consequences of either of the two former kinds of visions." (Remigius.)

III. The relation between a clear vision and purity of heart is expressed by our Lord (S. Matt. vi. 23), upon which words Theophylact writes : "That if you should shut up your mind by the care of earthly possessions, you have extinguished the light, you have darkened your soul, for as the open eye, that is being healthy, enlightens the body ; but if it be evil that, that is diseased, it darkens : so is the mind darkened by care. If the mind (*nous*) is darkened, the soul (*psyche*) becomes dark, and how much more so the body."

IV. Sin of every kind, over-thought, sorrow without hope, and the like, are all as so many veils which darken the eye of the mind, at least, to the destruction of all fine vision.

*Epilogue.*—Strive and pray for a clear vision in all things ; to see aright duty, both to God and to man ; pray for the enlightenment of the eye of Faith, that it may gain, though even a feeble and imperfect vision, some glimpse of those good things which God hath prepared for those that love Him.

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## SERMON III.

(First Sunday in Advent.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## THE MOUNTAIN OF REPENTANCE.

ISAIAH II. 3.

"Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."

*Introduction.*—"This is the mountain of repentance, called actively, 'The mountain of the Lord,' for He established it, saying, 'Repent ye, and believe.' (S. Mark i. 15; S. Luke xiii. 3.) Except ye repent, etc., passively, for He ascended it at His temptation. In the Quadragesimal mount, Jesus Christ is transformed from the figure of rigorous justice, into the figure of abundant mercy." (S. Vincent Ferrer, Quadragesimale, Ser. 17, c.)

The soul journeys heavenwards by travelling up this mountain of Repentance, which is hard and difficult to climb; its path is steep; its obstacles are many; but its rewards are great. (Rev. iii. 12, 21.)

Ascending the mountain of repentance there is gained—

1. *Knowledge*—(a) of the soul, of its springs of action, for Repentance is the key to self-knowledge; (b) Of Divine grace, and of God, and His dealings with us through Jesus Christ. This knowledge is that of (a) Reward: for past endeavours, for former humility, for present progress. Every thought, or word, or

deed, brings either reward or punishment with it ;  
 (b) Experience : gained by hard struggles and bitter trials, bought at the price of much sacrifice, and suffering, and yet not too dearly bought, for that cannot be ; (c) Intuition : by which the soul will be prepared for a greater revelation and a further knowledge in a more perfect state of being.

II. *Power*—to subdue sin and to break down the old habits of it. Our vantage ground increases as we ascend the “mountain of repentance.” For (a) We are further removed from our spiritual foes ; (b) We are raised above them, and therefore we fight against them at an advantage ; (c) We have gained confidence in our ascent.

III. *Contentment*—being raised above the winds of passion. The summit of the mountain lies in that calm region where passion and sorrow find no place for contention.

IV. *Security*—as having left below many occasions of sin. Mounting up into a higher region of faith, knowledge, thought, and desire, the lower things of this lower life have lost their power to disturb and to attract the soul. We are not vulnerable as we once were to the arrows of sin and Satan. The old things of

our old life tempt us not. We are no longer children delighted with the toys of sin, harmful as they are. We have put away childish things. (1 Cor. xiii. 11.) This security is (a) Real; (b) Rational; (c) Lasting.

*Indicia.*—I. “So great is the medicine of repentance, that God seems to change His decree.” (S. Ambros. De Pœnit. ii. c. 10.) It is to the soul what the ascent of the mountain is to the body. The flesh says, stay in the valley of plenty, of luxury, of sin; remain in Sodom, wherefore flee away unto the mountain? Wherefore afflict thy body by toil, hardship and privation? Wherefore apply this medicine to thy soul, so bitter to the spiritual taste, so humbling to the pride, demanding, as it does, such spiritual diet as prevents the soul from feeding upon any of the lusts, pomps and vanities of this life?

II. Wherefore? “Because repentance is as a sword which slays the old man with its affections and lusts.” (Guerric.) It denies a life to be given to the old life of sin. Ascending the mountain of repentance, old habits are broken through, old associations are left behind. The former life can be lived no more. The soul is forced to breathe a purer air, and to dispense with much that it deemed to be necessary to its very existence.

III. This "mountain" is not of man, but "of the Lord." He ordained it as a means by which the pardon of the precious blood could be applied to our recovery from a state of sin. For our sakes He established it. "God feeds us not with torments, but He heals us by those medicines which are contrary to our sins." (S. Jerome Epist. ad Demet.) The disease is great, the remedy therefore must needs be bitter. Repentance applies to the soul the blood of Jesus Christ the righteous, "which cleanseth us from all sin."

*Epilogue.*—Make the ascent with (a) Courage ; (b) Perseverance ; (c) Hope.

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## SERMON IV.

(First Sunday in Advent.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

### THE TABERNACLE OF THE SOUL.

ISAIAH IV. 6.

"There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat," etc.

*Introduction.*—"By the word tabernacle we sometimes understand the dwelling-place of the body, at another time the dwelling of the soul ; for as by the mind we dwell in the body, so by our thoughts we dwell in the mind." (S. Gregory the Great—Morals in Job : lib. xvi. Tom. ii. c. 410 c.)

“The tabernacle is the place of those journeying, and warring ; when you hear the word, understand war, beware of the enemy.” (S. Aug. Tom. viii. p. 139. E.)

“When we wage war with the devil there is need of a tabernacle to which we can flee.” (S. Aug. Tom. viii. p. 30. B.)

“Shadow,” “refuge,” and “covert ;” all imply the warfare of life (Job. vii. 1) which arises from toil, disappointment, sorrow, and temptation, etc. We escape from these things by going into the tabernacle of the soul, to hold communion with—

1. *God*—in Sacrament, prayer, and meditation. (Isa. xxvi. 3.)

God by His Grace and Spirit dwelling in the soul ; all the acts of faith, communion, prayer, etc., tend to lead the thoughts within ; and thought thus going within finds God there, waiting to receive it. So that the chief effect of these acts of faith is sympathetic: they bring the thoughts, affections, desires, and aspirations, to a common centre, and therein is found the presence of Jesus. In the Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus not only in a special manner comes into the Tabernacle of the Soul ; but the spiritual man, refreshed and quickened thereby, goeth there to meet Him. Let these inward, sacramental goings into the soul be (*a*) Frequent, daily, if

possible ; (b) Perfect, so as, for the time, to exclude worldly thought and care ; (c) Prepared for, by holiness of life, and consistency of Christian conduct.

- II. *Holy Scripture*—(Ps. cxix. 11) “That I might not sin against Thee.” Knowledge, which is divine, true, good, and beautiful, is as water, which purifies the “Tabernacle of the Soul.” There is a cleansing power in Holy Scripture. (S. John xv. 3.) “I will make you clean through my teaching.” (Theodor. Heracl.) Holy Scripture translates the soul into communion with God, saints, and angels.
- III. *Ourselves*—(Ps. iv. 4) “and be still” ; at rest and in quietness. Self as being a place of (a) Secrecy ; (b) Quiet ; (c) Rest.
- IV. *Holy thoughts of others*—which as angels enter into the soul. Every thought is an angel or messenger of God, either for good or for evil. The holy thoughts of others are a kind of angel visitants, and they come into the soul to (a) Warn and reprove for shortcomings ; (b) Direct and guide by their counsel and example ; (c) Cheer, by inspiring fresh hopes and assurances.

*Indicia.*—I. “But each one of us is also able to form in himself a Tabernacle for God. For if this (the Jewish) tabernacle contains a representation of the whole world, and each single person is able to bear the image of the

world, why also cannot each one, perfect in himself the form of the tabernacle?" (Origen Hom. vi. on Exod.) The Father goes on to explain the formation of this tabernacle of the soul. It must have seven columns of silver, which represent reasonable patience—reasonable, for some lack the sense to perceive injury; in such, patience is seen, but it is not reasonable: the columns may in this case support the tabernacle, but they are not silvered. But he who suffers on account of the Word of God, and endures bravely, he is decorated and strengthened with silver columns. He is able also in himself to stretch out walls (2 Cor. vi. 11), to have the heads of his column gilded by faith in Christ. "The head of every man is Christ." (1 Cor. xi. 3.) The columns can stand upon silver bases when the tabernacle is placed upon the stability of the Word of God, prophetic and apostolical. Its ten walls comprise the decalogue expanded into the Fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. v. 22.) This Tabernacle of the Soul will have in it a mind of devotion (Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5), and in it will be offered the spiritual sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, and the other acts of the Christian life.

II. How this Tabernacle of the Soul can be formed we learn from Ambrosius Ansbertus, who citing (S. John xiv. 23) adds, "in these words it is clearly implied that he who may have kept the Word of God is able to become the tabernacle of God."

III. S. Nilus (Epist. 320) beautifully observes that the tabernacle in the wilderness, erected by Moses, that is the soul forsaken, and destitute of human culture, is meet to become the habitation of God.

*Epilogue.*—Ever and anon may we have rest during this our earthly life.

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### SERMON V.

(*Second Sunday in Advent.*)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE HEDGES OF THE VINEYARD.

ISAIAH V. 5.

“I will take away the hedge thereof.”

*Introduction.*—“Neither man nor anything that exists, as having being, is wholly left without Divine providence, but yet God, according to the order of His providence, is said to leave man, since He allows him to fall into some defeat either of sin or of punishment. Likewise the guardian angel, without forsaking a man, does not hinder his being subdued by any tribulation. Hence Babylon and the house of Israel are said to be left by the angels, since they guard them not from tribulations.” (S. Thomas Aquinas, Summa 1<sup>a</sup>. q. cxiii. 6. 1<sup>m</sup>.)

This vineyard is the human soul, planted on the “very fruitful hill of the Church.” Its hedges are—

I. *The love and fear of God*—protecting from hidden sin.

These are, so to speak, the body-guards of the soul. Like the fiery sword of old, they “turn every way to keep the way” of access to the heart. Fear, gives caution and vigilance ; love, gives strength and boldness ; so with these two on duty, it becomes a hard matter for sin and Satan to gain an entrance within the citadel. The guard, which the fear and the love of God dwelling in the soul, to be effective needs be, is (a) Sleepless (1 Pet. v. 8) ; let the guards but slumber, the soul must fall. David left an unguarded moment at eventide (2 Sam. xi. 2) ; (b) Vigilant, lest any small portal be left open, any hidden corner be unguarded ; (c) Strong to resist.

- II. *The love and fear of man*—leading to a moral outward life. Next to the fear and love of God comes the fear and love of man ; the desire to stand well and honorably in the world ; that self-respect which keeps up the moral tone of life, and of its dealings. This also becomes a guard, preventing the soul from those gross and open sins which go before a man to judgment. This “hedge” preserves from defilement our several relationships of life, and makes our light to shine before both God and man. (S. Matt. v. 16.)

- III. *Conscience*—a secret, sleepless, just witness. Conscience, a jealous, stern monitor, will not allow sin to be committed with impunity. It is an active member of the lawful "Government" against the "opposition" of Satan and his rebels. It is the out-lying hedge of the soul, and it cannot be broken down without (a) Alarm; (b) A protest; (c) A sense of shame.
- IV. *Our Guardian Angel*—ever prompting to what is right. So has the Church taught for centuries, thus interpreting (S. Matt. xviii. 10.) Note Theophylact's beautiful commentary on the guardian angels of the wicked, being ashamed and losing confidence before God.

*Indicia*—I. As "The vine signifies the security of holiness" (S. Eucher. De Formulis. Spirit. c. 8), so does the vineyard signify the people of God, who by their several transgressions often provoked Him to anger (Pet. Bless. Ser. 13); but "we are not only the vineyard (*vinea*) of the Lord, but we are His vintage" (*vindemia*). (Pasch. Rad. De Cor. et San. Christi. c. 10.) The fruits of our souls are those holy thoughts, desires, resolutions, which find their outward expression in holy words and deeds. "We," exclaims S. Augustine, "are the vineyard of the Lord, who cultivates us for the sake of the fruit." The earthly husbandman of the earthly vine "is not able to give increase to the twigs, is not able to modify the seeds, is not able to temper the

seasons of produce. But God, who is our Husbandman, can do all things ; we are secure." (Enarr. in Ps. lxxvi.)

II. Of this vineyard of the soul, "The guardianship of God can be called a hedge which protects this vineyard from the snares which surround it." (Euthy. in Quat. Evan. c. 50.) For He is ever ready and willing to protect the Church, His vineyard, collectively, and every soul in that Church, each one being a vineyard in himself.

III. Be it our care to keep these hedges in good repair. It was an old lament that "The true vineyard, and one thoroughly purged by the Good Husbandman, and one that was wont to bear fair crops for the divine grannary, was turned to bitterness." (S. Greg. Naz. Orat. 12.) A wasted garden is a weary sight, but what a sight for tears of angels and of men, is the vineyard of the soul with its hedges broken down.

*Epilogue.*—Oh! forfeit not these blessed protections ; cherish them, that they may fortify and entrench the garden or vineyard of the soul by the hedges of love, grace, and fear, so that the enemy may ever be unable to enter, and lay waste the soul.

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## SERMON VI.

(Second Sunday in Advent.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## SILENT HOLINESS.

ISAIAH V. 7.

"He looked for righteousness, but behold a cry."

*Introduction.*—This is an example of paranomasia, or word-play. "Righteousness" (*tsedakah*) differs from "cry" (*tsevakah*) by only one letter. This cry is like that of those sinning, and crying, "Away with Him!" whence S. Paul says, "Let all clamour (*κραυγή*) be put away from you." (Eph. iv. 31.) As the Jews poured out the blood of the Lord, so that blood cried against them to God, just as Abel's blood cried against Cain. (Gen. iv. 10.) (S. Jerome in loco.)

"He who distorts the justice of his cause, confuses all things with cries, which are here opposed to righteousness. He has a bad cause whose cry is loud." (Louis de Ayllon.)

Real holiness, unlike that of the Jews, is silent, for it is—  
 1. *Deep*—beyond expression in words, too subtle and sacred. The highest and deepest emotions of our nature admit of but little outward show; when the heart bleeds, it bleeds inwardly, and its greatest acts of thanksgiving also, are ever made in secret. The highest intensity of our nature is realised in Him of Whom (S. Matt. xii. 19.) Real holiness

lies beyond the sphere of language, it is to be felt, but not expressed, it is as a whisper of the spirit within the soul. It is deep, for its root lies buried in (a) Feelings too sacred for revealing to the eye of men ; so S. Paul sadly confesses (Philip. ii. 20) ; So to Isaac, pouring out his soul (*lasnak*) (Gen. xxiv 63) ; (b) Experiences, sorrows, joys, trials, defeats, and victories, which belong to itself alone ; (c) Hopes which it would fear to parade before anyone save God.

- II. *Consistent*—founded upon the conviction of a life, not upon a changing cry : “ Hosannah,” “ Crucify Him.” It is ever working for, and pressing onwards to, its own goal—looking to the far-off land. (Isaiah xxxiii. 17.) Its main purpose is the salvation of the soul, and towards that end it never relaxes its endeavours. It is consistent with (a) Its aim ; (b) Itself as a course of life, and as a protest against the ungodly ; (c) In the allegiance and duty which it owes to God.
- III. *Fervent* in aspiration of heart, not in profession. As burning with an inward fire of love and grace, which ever keeps the soul (a) Warm, with love and holy desires ; (b) Bright, as opposed to sluggishness and indifference ; (c) Cheerful, being sustained by hope.

- iv. *Retiring*—not desiring to be heard of men. It is like some of our most lovely wild plants, such as “The Enchanter’s Night-shade,” which grows in hidden and sequestered leafy spots. Hence our Lord directs prayer as an act of holiness, to be said in secret. (S. Matt. vi. 6.) True holiness is (*a*) Humble, and therefore it courts retirement ; (*b*) Reserved, preserving its relations between God and the soul intact ; (*c*) Within, and not without. The Kingdom of God within a man.

*Indicia*.—I. Righteousness (*justitia*) is defined to be the concord or harmony of the several parts of the soul : but holiness (*sanctitas*) is the worship of God. (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. 4. § 26.) There are three forms of holiness : righteousness, or justice ; purification, which carries a certain consecration with it, for “never at any time ought they mortally to live who are consecrated to God” (S. Clem. Alex. Pæd. ii. c. 10) ; and lastly, holiness which contains the other two definitions, and implies that service of God which consists in a waiting upon God. In such a waiting, is implied a satisfied and silent obedience ; no sound or cry cometh forth from the soul that realizes at once the dignity and the awfulness of standing, as it were, in the presence of God. Servants may converse till the Lord appeareth ; He cometh, and every voice is hushed. The Lord hath come to

His temple, the holy soul, let all keep silence before Him.

II. "Though anyone say that the voice which is rolled through the lower air does not reach God, yet the thoughts of the holy make their way not only through the air, but through the whole world." (S. Clem. Alex. Stom. vii. c. 7), so that there is no need for holiness to cry: its every yearning, thought, and conception, ascends to the ears of the Lord. The lost will and must cry. (Rev. vi. 16.)

III. The life of silent holiness is in itself a cry, for a holy life contains both a cry and teaching, for holiness is sweeter than the naked leaves of words; since example is before eloquence. (S. Pet. Dam. Tom. 1, p. 121.)

*Epilogue.*—Seek to perfect holiness in the quiet fear of God.

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## SERMON VII.

(Second Sunday in Advent.)

*Evening Lesson.*

### WISDOM.

ISAIAH XI. 2.

"The spirit of wisdom."

*Introduction.*—"True wisdom is a certain divine power which has the faculty of knowing what things there are, and how they are; having that which is perfect, and freed

from all violent feeling." (S. Clement of Alexandria, *Stomata* lib. i. c. xxviii.) "Wisdom is the knowledge of things divine and human, and of the cause of these things." (*Ibid* strom. lib. i. c. v.) Wisdom which so dwelt in the human nature of our blessed Lord, and which by His Spirit of Wisdom dwells in all the faithful children of the Church, is—

- i. *Particular*—suited to each one's mind, capacity and wants. The wisdom of another is of no use to me. (In Anglo-Saxon, *wis* - wise, *dom* - state or condition.) Wisdom means being in a wise state. Therefore wisdom must admit of many forms, for each man needs a wise state or wisdom particular to himself. So each man needs to be wise unto himself in relation to (a) God, and to his eternal state, for we all are different sinners in God's sight, we have all our various grades of nearness to heaven; (b) His own heart, to know its strength and its weakness; (c) Life and duty, their demands and the fulfilment of them.
- ii. *Prudent*—in season, ready for use when wanted, when any great crisis may arise. This is the great value of heavenly wisdom, that it supports in the hour of extremest sorrow, of even death itself. It is (a) Dismayed by no sudden calamity; (b) Prepared for every sudden emergency; (c) Ready to make the best of every misfortune and trial.

III. *Practical*—capable of becoming a blessing to its possessor from the fruit which it brings forth. It finds its completion in action. It is an active guide, counsellor, and ruler of life. Hence our blessed Lord becomes this wisdom to us. (1 Cor. i. 30.) “For He hath given to us the true Wisdom” (Theodor.) that our lives by His gift and grace might be ordered (*a*) Holily, so as to fit us for heaven! (*b*) Happily, as living in resignation to God’s holy will; (*c*) Humbly, as walking in the “meekness of wisdom.” (S. James iii. 13.)

IV. *Provident*—foreseeing, preparing for the future, laying up in store a good foundation. Like the ant, providing for the winter of life, which is (*a*) Cold, wanting in the fire, joy, and hope of youth; (*b*) Barren, incapable of production; (*c*) Weak, terrible in its feebleness. Then the power of Jesus and His warming love becomes the one help of souls.

*Indicia.*—1. Philo considers (De Somniis, § 27) that all wisdom comes from either instruction (*μαθήσις*) or practice (*ἀσκήσις*) or by nature (*φύσις*). Abraham, who was divinely instructed by God, is an example of the first source of wisdom. Hence the advantage of Christian teaching, of sound religious instruction, of hearing spoken by the Church words of wisdom. Jacob represents the man who acquires

wisdom by practice. Therefore did he wrestle with the angel. (Gen. xxxii. 26.) Isaac is a type of the third source of wisdom. God's Spirit ever dwelt in him, therefore he was a man "self-hearing" (*αὐτήκοος*), ever listening to and waiting for the sacred voice of his diviner soul speaking to himself from within. He was also (*δευρομαθής*) "self-instructed," gaining his wisdom by meditation upon heavenly things, by communion with his own heart. This intuitive wisdom, springing from the divine life within, is the root and source of all wisdom, and it is within the reach of each baptized one to gain a portion, at least, of such wisdom.

II. Wisdom is that knowledge which presides over the house of the soul, and reduces all its inmates to tune and harmony, forming a real unity of soul, and converting its recipient into a harmonised man. (Plato. Rep. iv. 443. E.) This knowledge is to be identified with that "knowledge of God" (Coloss. i. 10) which is the sum and fount of all real wisdom.

III. "Consider wisdom to be the seeing of all things." (S. Greg. Naz. Iamb. xv. l. 63.) Seek as being wise to have an unclouded vision.

*Epilogue.*—See that this Spirit of Wisdom be both gained and be used, so as to bring a blessing for this life, and glory and happiness in the life to come.

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## SERMON VIII.

(Second Sunday in Advent.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## THE MAN OF EARTH.

ISAIAH XXIV. 17.

“Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.”

*Introduction.*—“This is spoken of the sinner who is an ‘inhabitant of the earth’ because he dwells in it, not only with the body, but also with the soul, the affection, and the heart ; for whatsoever he thinks, desires, speaks or does, is earthly. The righteous man, in this sense, cannot properly be called an inhabitant of earth, but he is rather to be spoken of as an inhabitant of heaven ; for though in the body he is on earth, yet in the spirit he dwells in heavenly places, since, as S. Augustine says, “The soul (*anima*) is rather where it loves (*amat*), than where it animates (*animat*.)” (Diez Conciones. Tom. ii. 7, 308, C.D.)

The sinner, being a “man of earth” is—

1. *Blind*—wanting the eye of faith to see the things above, such as God, heaven, the holy angels, the other sights of grace. Not only from a blindness which comes from nature, but from an acquired bad habit of the spiritual eye ; for the eye that ever looks below, and is cast upon the ground, cannot at the same

time see the things which are above. Many sights require an educated eye for their discernment. The Botanist sees twenty distinct plants where the untaught note but a tangled mass, consisting of a few weeds only. The Astronomer beholds twenty stars where they who are ignorant of his science can hardly perceive one. Grace (1) Purges the eye, enabling it to see clearly; (2) Directs the eye to see rightly; (3) Instructs the eye to observe minutely.

II. *Short-lived*—the objects of his life soon pass away.

Such objects as are confined to this earth, are ever passing away; but when another, better, and higher life is attained, "the man of earth" becomes the man of heaven. The objects of this new and regenerate life are eternal: they are centred round an eternal state. As the new nature of man is immortal, so the attributes, desires, and workings of this nature are immortal too. Earthly objects pass away, being supplanted by others, being affected by the changeability of this present world itself.

III. *Small*—for small, poor, and trivial things fill his soul.

Not to ourselves, it may be, for the passing moment, but in relation to what ought to be the ends, aims, and final purpose of life, in relation to the great things of God's mind, which are revealed to us.

iv. *Imperfect*—sin has taken away his higher and better parts. As not tending to a full and perfect end, as not being complete and sufficient in themselves. For the word imperfection signifies anything that is not thoroughly carried through to completeness. The Greeks regarded it as failing as to its end (*ἀτέλεια*). There is an imperfection in sin as well as in grace ; and a perfection in sin as well as in holiness —“The man of earth ” may be perfect as such, but imperfect in relation to his higher and ordained life. (Aristot. *Metap.* iv. c. 16.)

*Indicia.*—I. The “man of earth ” is described (S. August. *Enarr. Ps. li.*) as one who sends his heart into the deep (*in profundum*), instead of joining it with angels ; he sends it down into the abyss of sorrow and of sin ; of speculation or of doubt ; into a region of darkness and despair, “The bottomless pit ” of separation from God. The things of the world pure and simple, lead down to the terrible abyss, just as the things of God lead upwards towards the region of light and love.

II. “I am able to prove by the testimonies of the Scriptures how the sinner is called earth : for it was said to Adam, ‘Dust thou art,’ etc. (Gen. iii. 19), wherefore we can now say that the sinner offending is earth.” (Origen *Hom.* 4

In Ezech.) Sin destroys the heavenly nature in man, and therefore earth can claim him for her own.

III. Tertullian, (Ad Marcion, lib. v.,) is very strong, in commenting upon (1 Cor. xv. 49), taking up the old reading, let us also bear, which the Vulgate supports: as "not referring to any matter of the Resurrection, but to the discipline of the present time." "Let us bear," he says, "not, we shall bear," preceptively, not promissively, wishing us to depart from the earth, which is the image of the old man.

*Epilogue.*—Why remain you a man of earth? Jesus came to make you a man of heaven.

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## SERMON IX.

(Third Sunday in Advent.)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE SHADOW OF JESUS.

ISAIAH XXV. 4.

"Lord, Thou hast been a shadow from the heat."

*Introduction.*—"It is an old tradition that the penitent thief who was crucified at the Lord's right hand, was converted because the shadow of the cross fell upon him, enlightening him by its very darkness, and no wonder, since the shadow of S. Peter had such mighty power."

(Acts v. 15, 16.) (S. Vincent Ferrer. Quadragesimale. Ser. 61.) Jesus in His divinity is all light, and can cast no shadow. As Son of Man, during His earthly life, He cast over this weary world the shadows of (1) Love; (2) Obedience; (3) Self-denial, etc. Jesus now casts His shadow (a) Between God and ourselves, lest we be consumed; (b) The world and ourselves, lest it deceive us; (c) Satan and ourselves, lest he claim us as his prey. The shadow of Jesus is a—

1. *Protection*—from the sun of this world, from its heat and its temptation. The traveller in very hot countries cannot travel in the mid-day without some shadow, shade or protection; the sun playing upon an unprotected head would soon prove fatal in its effects. The Christian life is a journey in a spiritual desert. The Christian's sun, from which he needs to be guarded, is the temptation of this world, when its riches, honours, pleasures shed their bright, but burning beams, directly upon him. Jesus comes, and He casts the blessed shadow of His holy life between this sun and ourselves, protecting us from its glare and influence, and this protection by him is (a) Careful, ever mindful of our several temptations. It is because He takes such care of us He could say (S. John xviii. 9) "none"; (b) Sufficient, as is His

salvation (Ps. xci. 2); (c) Unfailing, "unto the end" (S. John xiii. 1.)

- II. *Comfort*—when the rains of sorrow descend, and the clouds of adversity lower. It was so prophesied of Him (Isa. lxi. 2), as having sorrowed and suffered (a) Before us, so being able to enter into our sorrows. He was "a Man of sorrows" (Isai. liii. 3); (b) On our behalf, that we may be saved the greater pains; (c) As Victor, that we through Him may overcome.
- III. *Refreshment*—when the winds of doubt dry up the spiritual life. The shadow of Jesus is the refreshing shadow of a great rock in a weary land. (Isa. xxxii. 2.) Refreshes our (a) Thirst (S. John vii. 37); (b) Hunger (S. John vi. 48); (c) Fatigue (S. Matt. xi. 28).
- IV. *Help*—in the sorrow, cold and darkness of death. As from the heat, so does He shelter us from the cold of death, warming the soul by His (a) Love, bringing all that He did, suffered and wrought, home to the soul to warm it now; (b) Promises, of a newer and better and a happier life, purchased for us by Himself; (c) Presence in His holy Sacraments, and in the heart (Eph. iii. 17) cheering and sustaining.

*Indicia*.—I. Psellus (A.D. 500) sings in his *Sanctus* of

the protecting power of this shadow: "I desired very often, everywhere to behold the shadow, when the flame of temptation greatly burned me; but behold! now I have sat down, and I am glad, I rejoice and I have escaped the burning heat, that of the ordeal. Whensoever the Sweetest, the Word, and Bridegroom shall overshadow me with His divine wings, He shall ward off the flame of temptation."

II. This shadow is for the holy, "for carnal desire having been subdued, and not before, have we rested under the shadow of the apple tree." (Euseb. Pamph.) The shadow of Jesus is of no avail for the hardened and the unrepentant.

III. Faith is "the shadow of Jesus." "We are in the shadow as long as we walk by faith and not by sight, and therefore the righteous man who lives by faith is under the shadow. First we come to the shadow, and then we must pass through it to that of which it is the shadow, for see that faith is both life and the shadow of life." (S. Bernard. Ser. 48. Super. Cant.)

IV. The Law was a shadow. (Heb. xi.) "And there is a certain advance, to come from the shadow of the Law to the shadow of Christ, who is the Way, the Life and the Truth, and so we pass into the shadow of the Way, then of the Life, and lastly of the Truth, till from seeing in a glass darkly we come to see face to face." (Origen.)

v. The Cross is "the shadow of Jesus," which falls upon us at the Eucharistic feast.

*Epilogue.*—Walk under the shadow of the Almighty till the lengthening shades are lost in the eternal day of God.

## SERMON X.

(Third Sunday in Advent.)

*Evening Lesson.*

### THE CHILDREN OF THE SOUL.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

"The desire of our soul is to Thy Name."

NEH. I. II.

"Who desire to fear Thy Name." (xvi. Trin. Even. Less.)

*Introduction.*—"When the soul, beloved by God, shall have been impregnated with the sweetness of the Word of God, and when it shall have become worthy to conceive the desire of eternal life, and to bring forth holy deeds; then will it be able joyfully to proclaim, and say, 'God with us.' The desire of eternal life is the virgin son of a changed soul." (Godefrid, Abbot. A.D. 1150. Homiliæ T. ii. c. 196 A.)

This desire for God's name, and for eternal life, is a conception, a product of the regenerate soul. All other holy desires are likewise "children of the soul," which are—

- I. *Beautiful*—all love beautiful children, and beautiful thoughts should be also produced by the mind, which becomes the parent of its own creations. This can be brought about by directing the thoughts and inspirations of the mind to “things lovely,” etc. (Philip. iv. 8), by striving to preserve an inward holiness, which banishes the ugliness of sin, for all the forms of sin are ugly. Sin is itself a malformation. A fair and beautiful body, by disease, may be rendered loathsome and horrible. The soul is hideous when steeped in sin, is beautiful when purified and illumined by divine grace; in which case, its thoughts, its children, are beautiful too. If the soul is to conceive beautiful thoughts, it must be filled by (a) Prayer; (b) Meditation; (c) Heavenly instruction.
  
- II. *Pure*—so as to be like Jesus, and so fitted to see Him hereafter; having the pure mind of Christ Jesus within it. From a pure spring pure water flows, from a tainted fount tainted streams proceed. This purity is the result of (a) Discipline, casting out all that offends, be it ever so dear; (b) Pardon, by which old sins and the scars of old sins are removed from it by purification; (c) Gifts of grace, which fill it up.

- III. *Obedient*—to God's mind and law. Wilful and disobedient children find but small favor. As (*a*) Knowing God's will ; (*b*) Delighting in it ; (*c*) Seeking in all humility to carry out in thought, word and deed.
- IV. *Wise and clever*—The product of grace, prayer, and illumination. Taught by and led by the Spirit ; illumined with the first rays of that heavenly light whence Wisdom cometh.
- V. *Loving*—to attach other hearts unto them. The product of a soul (*a*) Living in ; (*b*) Feeding upon ; and (*c*) Glorified by the love of God, who is love.

*Indicia.*—I. "There is no time when the soul does not bring forth ; it ever brings forth, it ever generates children. But that generation is blessed, which is begotten by the conceived Word of God, and this is the generation of children by which it becomes saved. It is therefore a blessed offspring which is made by the conjunction of the soul with the Word of God. Thence is born a noble progeny, thence springs up righteousness, patience, meekness and charity, and the worthy offspring of all the graces. But if it conceives by a contrary spirit, it is certain that it brings forth children of wrath meet for destruction. And perhaps the passage, Rom. ix. 11-14, has reference to this." (Origen. Hom. xx. In Numb.) The prophets make abundant mention of the evil children of the soul.

II. Of the power of these children of the soul for good, when they themselves are pure and holy. The words of the poet are an apt illustration—

“ The beings of the mind are not of clay ;  
Essentially immortal, they create  
And multiply in us a brighter ray,  
And more beloved existence.”

III. The advice which S. Paulinus gives to Sanctus and Amandus is, “ Pray ye that our souls may be both virgins and fruitful: virgins, without barrenness; fruitful, without corruption.” (Epist. xxvi.) In which case the children of the soul, the thoughts, must also be pure and beautiful.

IV. S. Ambrose, commenting on the birth of Cain and Abel from the same mother, and upon Gen. xxv. 23, refers this to the soul, “ understand her to be the same mother of good and bad—the one child to be nurtured, the other to be repudiated.”

*Epilogue.*—Seek for desires, for children of the soul, such as are beautiful, etc.

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## SERMON XI.

(Third Sunday in Advent.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## THE SOUL AND GOD.

ISAIAH XXVI. 9.

"With my soul have I desired Thee in the night."

*Introduction.*—"Because I love Thee above all things, thirsty, I pant for the internal grace of Thy sweetness, with which Thou art wont to nourish the soul that loves thee." (Godefrid, Abbot. A.D. 1150. Hom. Tom. i. c. 139. D.) A great master of the spiritual life (Richard of S. Victor. Migne, vol. cxcvi. p. 1217) has supplied us with four manifestations of this internal grace. When God enters into a soul that desires Him that soul—

1. *Shrinks*—from God, goes back into itself, as feeling itself unequal to bear God's presence. (S. Luke v. 8.) A new chord is struck, which vibrates in a strange manner to the soul; new sympathies are demanded; a new sense of unworthiness is produced. It hardly dares to look to Him. Partly from a feeling of its own great unworthiness (S. Matt. viii. 8), and partly from a sense of fear. "How dreadful"—meet to be feared (*nora*)—"is this place." (Gen. xxviii. 17.) After death it is said that the soul, as described by the poet—

“ Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel ;  
 But ere it reach them, the keen sanctity  
 With which its effluence, like a glory, clothes  
 And circles round the Crucified, has seized  
 And scorch'd and shrivelled it.”

God's presence brings so mighty an introspection with it, that with the full consciousness of its own infirmity it retires within itself (*a*) Humbly ; (*b*) Thankfully ; (*c*) Lovingly.

- II. *Touches*—God as if for a moment ; it longs to contemplate God ; the beginning of the times of refreshing has come. The hem of His garment, as it were, the soul touches by putting forth (*a*) Some strong desire ; (*b*) Some agony of repentance ; (*c*) Some all-absorbing love to Him. Going out of herself to unite herself for a brief moment with God. This moment forms the ecstasy of contemplation.
- III. *Cleaves*—to God ; rejoices in His presence ; is one with Him. A further advance in the divine life. The soul has become so far familiarized with God that His presence brings to her joy and peace ; fills her so with energy and unction that she cannot contain herself, but must communicate her joy (*a*) Freely ; (*b*) Sweetly ; (*c*) Savingly ; that others may “ taste and see how gracious the Lord is.”

iv. *Goes forth*—seized with the desire to communicate this internal grace to others. Goes forth from God to man.

*Indicia.*—i. Speaking of Jacob's dream S. Chrysostom observes (Hom. liv. in Gen.), "The righteous man feared the great philanthropy of God." Not His majesty, nor His judgments, but His love, and mercy, and pity ; His exceeding tenderness to one who felt himself to be so unworthy of His goodness as Jacob felt himself to be. As holiness increases, so does the sensibility of the soul increase, and this very sensibility induces a fear and a shrinking of the soul when coming into God's presence. This fear is rather a sign of holiness than of sin, for it is no craven, but a reverential fear, that leads the earnest soul to be at times overwhelmed under a sense of the nearness of the presence of God.

ii. To touch God the soul must pour out itself. (Ps. xlii. 4.) "Seeking my God, I poured my soul over me ; that I might touch Him, I remained not in myself. Be ye not willing to retain your hearts within your hearts. Pour our before Him your hearts, since that which you pour out does not perish ; for He is my receiver, and if He receive wherefore do I fear to pour out?" (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. xli.)

iii. "The heart which cleaves to God is one which is as a throne upon which God sits ; a seal with which He may

imprint His likeness ; a cellar which He may fill with His own wine ; a book in which He may write His remembrance ; gold which He may bend to His decree."

(Humbertus de Romanis, Epist. De Votis, c. 51.)

*Epilogue.*—May God lead us to a satisfied desire which results in holy action.

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## SERMON XII.

(Third Sunday in Advent.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

### REPETITION.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 13.

"Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little, and there a little."

*Introduction.*—"These are unlearned, slow, and stupid ; and so they have to be taught as children are, little by little, and by degrees ; by often inculcating the rudiments. The prophet, by repeating the same word, wished to signify a repetition that was constant, full, and of weariness. The metaphor is taken from those who build a wall, in allusion to the slow building, which rises in lines, little by little."

(Synopsis of the "Critici Sacri" in loco.)

S. Paul acknowledged the value of repetition (Phil. iii. 1), "the same things." This act of repetition is—

1. *Divine*—our Blessed Lord gave a form of prayer to be often and ever repeated. So is it also with Offices of the Church. So with the Psalms of David, and others, which were used in the Temple service at Jerusalem ; the liturgies of the Primitive Church ; and the time-honoured modified liturgies of our own and of other branches of the Catholic Church. Repetition is “divine,” as being divinely-appointed ; as a divine feature in divine worship. Hence they who use no established forms in their worship, worship after an order of their own, but not after the order of God, or of Jesus Christ, or of the Churches, either Jewish or Christian. This “divine” repetition in prayer and the other offices (*a*) Emphasizes the words used : we may say once something which we believe not, in anger or thoughtlessness. but we should not go on repeating this for weeks, months, or years, in our most solemn acts of worship ; (*b*) Repetition consecrates the words by their long continuous use in God’s service ; (*c*) Associates them with all the past time of our lives, and with the memories of others passed away.
- II. *Gainful*—it leads to all lessons in life, and godliness, being (1) Well-known ; (2) Remembered ; (3) Understood. The repetition engraves the repeated words

upon the heart, so that they cannot ever afterwards be lost.

III. *Pleasurable*—well-used words and thoughts become as old friends. We use them without any restraint or tax upon the mind. Yet they ever convey something new, and they delight us in themselves. Repetition has made these words, etc., become a very part of ourselves.

IV. *Adaptive*—suited for all capacities, the brightest and the dullest. In every form of speech, prayer, etc., we appropriate something, especially to ourselves, and make it our own by mental assimilation.

*Indicia.*—I. Repetition. by impressing the memory, gives the mind food for meditation, which “produces knowledge, knowledge compunction, compunction devotion, and devotion perfects prayer. It is knowledge, when man is illuminated to the knowledge of himself by constant meditation.” (S. Aug. De Sp. Lit. c. L.) So that repetition may be taken to be the groundwork of the spiritual life.

II. God repeats Himself in the natural world in the seasons, the succession of day and night, in the ever-recurring order of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and planets. In the moral and spiritual worlds the same phenomena are ever being repeated, in the rise and fall of

nations, systems of civilization and of beliefs. All the repeated past—for there is nothing new under the sun—is but a book in which God's repetitions are set down.

III. Repetition is a renewal : impressions are soon effaced, so repetition restores what was lost to the soul, and which then becomes to us like a new possession. Hence the same prayers are ever by use being renewed, and are ever new : association adding also to their force and intensity.

IV. Repetition is the medicine which cures a weak and failing memory.

V. This repetition is only needful now “because we have not yet come to that wisdom which fills the hearts and minds of those who behold it. There will be no need that anything then be read to us, for that which is read to us sounds the syllables and dies away : but the light of truth never passes away, but remains fixed, to inebriate the hearts of them who see it.” (S. Aug. Enarr. Ps. xciii.)

*Epilogue.*—Seeing that the repetition of moral and spiritual truth does not involve intellectual monotony, use repetition (1) Gladly ; (2) Daily ; (3) Carefully ; (4) Savingly.

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## SERMON XIII.

(Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## SMOOTH WORDS.

ISAIAH XXX. 10.

"Speak unto us smooth things."

*Introduction.*—They who so speak, says S. Augustine, are the men "who seek after leasing," who love earthly vanities, who buy lies, and who like the praise of unjust success. "Smooth words"—"Promising to us the kingdom of heaven, and that, after a life of luxury and pleasure, Paradise will be opened to us." (S. Jerome in loco.) It is often needful that men should hear plain and stern truth, both moral and spiritual. Such truth is both painful and curative, like the surgeon's knife. The cowardly and the wicked alone care for smooth words. These (Heb. *halákoth*) bland, pleasing, "smooth words" are not to be listened to, since they are—

1. *False*—care, sin and sorrow, forming, as they do, part of man's probation, demand speech stern and true. "Smooth things" are the portion of angels and glorified spirits. Life is a perpetual state of conflict, it is hard, and not smooth, and it demands a like speech. We are apt to sleep, and we must be awakened ; to fall away, and we must be admonished ;

to neglect our duty, and we must be reproved. "Smooth things," pleasant words spoken to us now are false to our (*a*) Nature, which, being sinful, ever needs correction; (*b*) Life, which lies so open, so very open to reproof; (*c*) Profession, in which we ever want the goad of words, strong, sharp, and biting, to urge us to press forwards.

- II. *Harmful*—lulling the soul to sleep, "speaking peace when there is no peace" (Jer. vi. 14), giving a fancied security in the midst of danger. For they (*a*) Hide the knowledge of sin, they prevent the soul from seeing, even in part, its own guilt; (*b*) Hinder repentance. Why should a soul repent which is ignorant of its guilt, and has no sense of any need? (*c*) Tell a lie to the soul, which, if believed in, must end in eternal loss.
- III. *Seductive*—they captivate the imagination; if but half believed in, they overpower the reason and the conscience. They are to the soul what an opiate is to the brain. They (*a*) Enervate, eat all power and strength out of the soul; (*b*) Please, where they ought to awaken fear and anger; (*c*) Corrupt, by placing a low standard of life before the soul.
- IV. *Superficial*—they only glance over the surface of the soul. Words ought to be like medicines which,

taken within the system, search out and penetrate into the weak part of the body, probing its disease. The smooth words leave untouched (*a*) The conscience, which they ought to stimulate ; (*b*) The feelings, which they ought to control ; (*c*) The understanding, which they ought to awe.

*Indicia.*—I. The first charge to be brought against “smooth words” is that they do not care one jot or tittle for that which is best. (Plato. Gorg. 464 D.) The best advice and counsel is as nothing to them, so that they only please. The same may be said of the best learning and knowledge, for “smooth words” place pleasure before instruction, they are careful how they wound the pride of ignorance.

II. The next indictment is, that with the bait of what is most agreeable for the moment ; they angle for folly (Plato. id.), trading upon either ignorance or upon weakness of mind. Certain poor and dark souls will not hear words good and true, if their lessons are unpalatable.

III. The third complaint against them is that they get the credit of being something of the highest value (Plato. Gorg. 464 F.), of being real current coin when they are but counterfeit coin and worthless impositions.

IV. Further, these smooth words do not contribute to the

truth of things, but they pervert the truth, praising actions which are deserving of blame, and often blaming those things which are beyond all praise. (Philo. Frag. lii.) Hence they are great perverters of truth.

v. One mark of false prophets is that they use "fair speaking" (*chrestologia*), "but within is the hook" (Theophyl. in S. Matt. vii. 15), for the fair or "smooth words" contain indeed a barbed hook.

*Epilogue.*—Probe to its depths the wound of sin; despise "smooth things."

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## SERMON XIV.

(Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

*Morning Lesson.*

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### DECLENSION.

ISAIAH XXX. 1, 2.

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that walk to go down into Egypt."

*Introduction.*—"The rebellious children,' spoken of here, are not children who (*re-bellum*) make war against God, but such as 'decline' from Him (Heb. *banin sorarim*), deserters, not opposers." (Fili desertores Vulg.) "These vex God

(Isaiah lxx. 11, 12) and incur punishment. When Judas was about to go out and betray his Lord, Jesus 'was troubled in spirit and testified' (S. John xiii. 21) against Him. The service of God is a straight path—the 'rebellious children' turn aside from it; they are children of God still; but they decline." (De Lanuza, Hom. xviii. 19. Tom. ii. p. 252.)

This declension from God is the following along a path which is—

1. *Crooked*—the way of sin is ever winding and tortuous — at length the sinner is lost in the fatal labyrinth. Seeking to descend the sides of a steep mountain in safety, it is needful to go down by a crooked path, so that the descent may be made gradually and easily. By winding in and out, and by going round about, the bottom is reached, ere the traveller is aware that he has descended to so low a level. The crookedness of the path has concealed the actual nature of the descent. So is it in descending from the hill of the Lord; the mountain of holiness; into the valley of sin. Being crooked, it makes the spiritual declension (*a*) Easy, attended with no sudden shock; (*b*) Gradual, so that the sinner does not immediately feel what he is doing; (*c*) Hidden; in vain he may turn back, and try to trace his downward path; He can see but a few steps of his retrogradation.

- II. *Wearisome*—leading hither and thither, and so tiring out patience, hope, and energy. As (*a*) Having no good issue ; as leading from the better to the worse ; (*b*) Giving no refreshment to the soul ; (*c*) Being a long road, which continues till the ruin is complete.
- III. *Uncertain*—dark, and doubtful : whilst the Way of God is light and sure. All uncertain in its course : but alas ! fearfully certain as to its results. The walk downwards into Egypt is one of (*a*) Gloom ; (*b*) Terror ; (*c*) Darkness : a darkness which must be felt.
- IV. *Fatal*—it must end in misery, despair, and death. There is no other alternative. When all that is holy, pure, and high, has been left behind ; before, there must needs be, (*a*) Sin, with its pains and penalties ; (*b*) Wretchedness, with no hope of deliverance ; (*c*) Death as the extreme punishment of sin remaining, as the final issue of declining from God.

*Indicia.*—I. Men fall from the way of God into the way of sin, because, like sheep, they must follow some leader, either God or Satan. (Ps. xlix. 14.) There is a Shepherd of Life and a shepherd of death. “Christ is Life, the devil death, not because he is death but because death comes by him. The death which men fear is the separation of soul and body, but the true death, which they do not fear, is the

separation of the soul from God. Death is the shepherd of the unbelieving, of those who attend to present things alone, and think not of the future. But we who think upon our future immortality, and who, not without cause, bear in our foreheads the sign of the Cross of Christ, have no shepherd save that of Life. The Shepherd of Life leads us into Heaven, now, by faith. He lifts up our heart. Where to, if not to Heaven? (Phil. iii. 20.) (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. xlviii.) Men decline from God because they follow not Jesus the Shepherd of Life.

II. Three ways lead to Heaven and God : holy thoughts, words, and deeds ; three ways lead from God : unholy thoughts, words, and deeds. (S. August. Ser. De Temp. xc.)

III. Declining from God, men fall into a way so full of care, grief, etc., that it eats away the soul. (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. v. § 5)

IV. Declining from God, the soul marches along a solitary path, and consumes itself like Bellerophon for want of Companionship. (Hom. II. vi. 202.)

*Epilogue.*—Cling to God ; abide patiently upon Him.

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## SERMON XV.

*(Fourth Sunday in Advent.)**Evening Lesson.*

## THE HOUSE OF PEACE.

ISAIAH XXXII. 17.

"The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

*Introduction.*—"The work of righteousness," that is, of those who are justified by grace, "is peace." These place the foundation of all good works upon peace of mind. And so "the effect of righteousness," that is, of the exterior act and habit, is quietness." When the interior man rests in the house of peace, the exterior man sits in a certain "quietness" of honor and "assurance:" in like manner to him resting, and dwelling, there will be "assurance for ever." (S. Antony of Padua, *Expositio Mystica*, in *Isaiah in loco*.)

The conception is, that the outward life gains a certain "quietness" and "assurance" when the interior man, the affections, thoughts, etc., dwell in a soul which is "the house of peace:" in which all the attributes of peace are to be found. This house of peace is a house of—

1. *Unity*—no warring or contending elements therein: the Will of God and of the soul are one—and unity is strength. The soul in which the Grace of God dwells,

is a house which is at unity with itself (Ps. cxxii. 3), or "compact together." God's Will and Mind reign therein with a supreme sway. Therefore all the elements of discord are cast out. The opposite state is described in Holy Scripture. (Rom. vii. 18, ad fin.) When the soul is thus at peace with God, it must also be at peace with itself, and it forms a home for "whatsoever things are honest," etc. (Phil. iv. 8.) Lastly, the inward peace manifests itself in the outward life: it flows from within outwards. The unity existing in this "house of peace." is (a) Perfect, all the members dwelling therein are as one. The Hebrew word (*shekubberah*, "That which is joined," from *kabar*,) implies an intensive conjunction or union (Ps. cxxii. 3); (b) Prophetic of the unity of Heaven; (c) Secure, founded upon righteousness.

11. *Contentment*—all wishing therein for nothing but what they have; discontent drives peace out of the house of the soul. Unsatisfied desire destroys peace, even when there is no outward manifestation or complaint. As the body only has peace when all its functions are in working order, so is it with the soul. Longing cannot co-exist with peace. Hence on earth no "house of peace" is finished in its building, for the soul can never be really satisfied till it sees God.

- III. *Love*—to God and man, which casts out doubt and fear. Of a love which is (*a*) Natural, having passed into the soul's nature ; (*b*) Universal, admitting of no hate ; (*c*) Profound, searching to the innermost recesses of our being.
- IV. *Holiness*—peace “is the work of righteousness,” sin brings strife. This forms the foundation of the “house of peace ;” it is (*a*) God-laid ; (*b*) Enduring ; (*c*) Broad, that the house may be spacious enough to allow of many Christian graces finding a resting-place there.

*Indicia.*—I. The Greek word for peace is derived from a verb signifying to bind, and the old Greek conception of peace, was, that it was a kind of harmony of life and language ; the result of thought, word, and deed, all working together, without discord, towards the same end. (Plato. Theæt. 176 A.) “It is called peace when no one is separated, no one disagrees, when nothing hostile, nothing rude is done.” (Origen ad Rom. lib. iv.) The soul is “a house of peace” when its powers, faculties, desires, affections, and judgments, all work in harmonious concord.

II. Where can this “house of peace” be built ? Where the sky is serene, the winds calm, but upon a firm foundation, so that it be not weakened by the dashing of the waters. When the mind is endued with the “peace which

passeth all understanding," and is endowed with the highest tranquillity, is liberated from every tumult, is agitated by no storms, then it is truly a "house of peace," a partaker of reason, capable of the contemplation of truth.

(Origen in Ioan. Tom. vi. pref.)

III. The door of the "house of peace" must be closed (S. John xx. 19) if we desire to retain peace; "the jarring elements of temptation must all be shut out, and the soul must retire within itself. The inhabitants of this house must all be of one mind; for the divisions of sin, are enemies to peace." (S. Guibert, A.D. 1240, De Tranquil. Ani. c. 25.)

*Epilogue.*—Seek for this righteousness, that your soul may become "a house of peace."

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## SERMON XVI.

(Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

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### THE FIRE OF SIN.

ISAIAH XXXIII. II.

"Your breath as a fire shall devour you."

*Introduction.*—"That is, your sensual spirit is a fire which will burn up all your graces; for although you may have accepted God for your king, you have remained false, and

have been inflamed with a thousand lusts, and with the fires of wickedness." (Diez Quadragesimale, Part iv. p. 39, § 3.)

The Heb. reads (*ruchachem esh*) "your spirit a fire," "your spirit will kindle a fire. so that the devouring flame may consume both the conception and the birth." (S. Jerome in loco.)

The primary meaning of the prophet is expressed by S. Jerome ; who borrows the "conception and birth" from the preceding verse ; it is, that sin consumes itself with the sinner. The spiritual and applied meaning refers it to our graces. This fire is—

1. *Self-kindled*—"your breath ;" the sinner is a spiritual suicide, he burns up all his holy thoughts. We never sufficiently realize how much for joy or grief, for holiness or for sin, for health or for sickness, lies in our own power. God claims both our birth and our death, but He may permit the latter to be hastened by our own sin and imprudence. Here the truth is brought out, that the man is not devoured or harmed by powers and influences from without, but by those from within. That this "fire of sin" and destruction is kindled by ourselves, and not by others. We are all but too apt to lay to the charge of external temptations, many of the sins which have their origin in the heart alone. As a spiritual suicide,

the sinner turns against himself his (a) Thoughts, the breath of his mind ; (b) Actions. the breath and functions of his body ; (c) Graces and endowments, prostituting them to sin ; so that he becomes a three-fold suicide.

- ii. *Inextinguishable*—by nature ; it is only to be put out by grace. This fire of a sensual spirit is so easy to kindle, and so hard to extinguish, that it may be said to be inextinguishable, and this because it is a fire which is (a) Ever burning ; (b) Ever growing stronger ; (c) Ever feeding upon itself. The sensual spirit within a man, burns like the burning bush (Ex. iii. 2), and yet remains unconsumed.
- iii. *Increasing*—it spreads like any other conflagration, affecting first one part of the mind and then another. As the fire on the prairie or the moor leaves nothing save a charred and burning mass behind it, and is ever going on to find fresh pampas grass, or ling, so the fire of the sensual spirit ever goes on increasing in force and intensity.
- iv. *Devouring*—shall devour you, burn till all is consumed. Burns as long as there is anything left to burn ; being (a) Pitiless ; (b) Unsatisfied ; (c) Destructive.

*Indicia*—i. The heart of man can be looked upon as an altar, upon which, if impenitent, the fire of sin and desire is

ever burning. The sacrifice is always going on. A succession of offerings is always being made. Once kindle the fire of sin upon the altar of the heart, and without the special grace of God, it can nevermore be extinguished. So easy, so very easy, to kindle at the first; so very hard, if not impossible, to extinguish afterwards. "Behold how great a matter," etc. (S. James iii. 5.) Beware of allowing the heart to become an altar on which the fire of sin can ever burn.

II. The fire of sin offered upon the altar of the heart leaves all the evil, all the anger, lust, covetousness, etc., in the heart wholly untouched, it feeds itself upon all that is holy, pure and Christlike. It burns away all the good. As fire will burn away wood or coal, and leave stones, brick, and other rubbish unconsumed, so this fire of sin burns away whatsoever is valuable for this world and the next, and leaves the refuse.

III. "The fire of sin offered upon the altar of the heart exhales an odour which is sweet to Satan. The sweet smell of a sacrifice acceptable unto him, but abominable, as being unlawful, to that God, the fire of whom consumes sin; whose Spirit purifies from sin; whose love makes the soul like unto the Seraphim." (S. August. Ser. cclvi. De Temp.)

*Epilogue.*—Never suffer the fire to be lighted. Prevention before cure.

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## SERMON XVII.

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(First Sunday after Christmas.)

*Morning Lesson.*

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## THE FOUNT OF DOCTRINE.

ISAIAH XXXV. 6.

“In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

*Introduction.*—“The Primitive Church supplied us with a rule of life, which is a fount of doctrine to the soul. The same purity which flows from the source of the spring, runs down through its last descensions. The four rivers of Paradise were types of the four Evangelists, who irrigated the whole breadth of the world by the fertility of their ever-flowing doctrine. Isaiah wrote prophetically of these, saying, ‘In the wilderness,’ etc.” (S. Peter Damiani. Tom. ii. p. 128, c. 2.)

This fount of doctrine flows—

1. *Uninterruptedly*—passing to each successive generation to the children of the Church. No break. This uninterrupted flow of doctrine is called “tradition,” from its being handed down from age to age. The New Testament throws out only hints and dark allusions to the discipline and ritual of the Primitive Church; the rudiments alone of which, at the time when the canon of Scripture closed, the Holy Ghost

had laid down. Even when the Order of the Church Services had become fixed, and definite "LITURGIES" were used, the heathen persecutions forced upon the early Christians, what was known as the "discipline of the secret." We trace then the stream of Church doctrine and ritual through the Apostolic, Sub-Apostolic, Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and the remaining "Fathers," from the time of our blessed Lord to our own, and this unbroken and continuous chain of evidence, and testimony, forms the fount of doctrine which is known as "Tradition." This uninterrupted flow of teaching, is a test of the Catholicity of the Church. Applied to it, it exposes all modern heresies and schisms, all forms of modern popular Protestantism, to be more or less anti-scriptural and pagan.

- II. *Freshly*—ever new and fresh, nothing stagnant in it. Fresh as admitting of an ever varied application to the successive generations of men ; fresh in its adaptation to human wants and human sympathy. The waters of this fount are both old and young. Old, as flowing from Apostolic times ; young, as being perpetually renewed.
- III. *Purely*—free from all impurities or harmful matters. When taken from their source they flow directly from the Holy Ghost.

iv. *Abundantly*—enough for all ; it fills the most exalted minds ; hence the invitation, “Come ye to the waters.” For all the world, and for all time. The larger the use, the more copious the supply. This “fount of doctrine” is (*a*) Full, the supply being regulated according to the needs of the Church. It is given like the manna of old, so that all may have enough, and yet that there may be nothing over ; (*b*) Free, as God’s natural water is in the country. They who care to bring the vessel of the soul (1 Thess. iv. 4) to this fount, can have it both filled and refreshed there ; (*c*) Inexhaustible, being the true knowledge of God, which generates and multiplies in each faithful soul.

*Indicia.*—I. “It is manifest to all, that the ancient and old-fashioned tradition of the Church is most strong, and that it is more evident and stronger than any demonstration, as the Holy Fathers, following the Apostolic oracles, teach ; since the Great Apostle bids, etc. (2 Thess. ii. 15), whether written or unwritten.” (S. Niceph. cont. Ichnomachos.) There is a tradition of custom as well as of word, and of word as well as of writing. Enthymius (Panop. ii. c. 27) points out that the use of the cross in Baptism, the turning to the east at the Creed, and the formula of consecration, and that too with the words which we say before and after it,

which are not mentioned in the Gospel, but which lend great weight to the mystery.

II. The word "tradition" implies a giving from one to another, a handing down, and therefore, to be a tradition at all, it must possess continuity; moreover, to be handed down it must have been received by many in the first place, and this very acceptance is to a certain extent a proof of worth.

III. "The things which are not written, but delivered, we keep." (S. August. Ep. 118. Ad. Jan. A.) The spouse, the Church, feeds her children out of both breasts, the written, and the orally-delivered word.

*Epilogue.*—Drink from this fount in (1) Faith, as to its saving virtue; (2) Moderation; (3) Submission to your spiritual instructor.

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## SERMON XVIII.

(First Sunday after Christmas.)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE WATER OF GRACE.

ISAIAH XXXV. 6.

"In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

*Introduction.*—"This water is the Holy Spirit: in the heart of God the Father, it is a fountain of life; in the

mouth of God the Son, it is a river of grace and peace ; in the blessed angels, it is a torrent of glory ; in the elect, it is an inundation of life. By whomsoever drunk, it flows back to its source, the abyss of eternal Divinity. It is deeper than hell, higher than Heaven, broader than the sea. It raises up the soul of the drinker even from hell to life eternal ; it diffuses through the bosom of the heart rivers of wisdom and of knowledge, filling the whole cavity of the mind, and, little by little, breaking forth through the passage of the mouth into the Word of Life." (Rupert of Deutz. in Ioan. Cap. iii. pp. 82, 83.) This Water of Life—

1. *Purifies*—the affections from all taint of sin. Purification is an important function of natural water. Rain cleanses the earth ; man uses large quantities of water for purgative purposes. One action of "the Water of Grace" is to cleanse the affections from "all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit" (2 Cor. vii. 1) or mind. The affections form the most subtle and delicate part of the mind. They are the most easily deranged and defiled of the whole inner man. The dust of this or of that desire has settled upon them. The stream of grace passes over them (a) Gently, without pain ; (b) Silently, without noise and tumult ; (c) Continuously, and one by one the foreign particles become washed off from

the affections, and they return to their true, old, and holy allegiance.

- II. *Quickens*—the understanding to spiritually discern. Doing for the understanding just that which water does for the nascent seed or fibre. It develops life. To the understanding, discernment is one form of life, and this the water of grace cherishes into action, teaching it to discern between (a) Holiness and sin ; (b) Faith and unbelief ; (c) The kingdom of man, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ. To discern, moreover, as showing the understanding some of the mysteries and glories which the eye of faith alone can see.
- III. *Refreshes*—the will worn out with conflict. As the summer shower refreshes the earth, parched and dry, so does the Water of Grace revive the will, refreshing with (a) The promise and hope of victory ; (b) Present strength ; (c) Present joy and peace.
- IV. *Beautifies*—the entire soul and life, giving rise to the fruits of holiness. Nature is beautiful in the spring-tide of her productive energy ; the soul is beautified when fertilized by the Water of Grace. All production that is healthy and good is truly beautiful. The formation of the young, pure, and fresh, from that which is all but ready itself to die, is lovely, as being

an emblem of immortality, a continued protest against decay and death. These fruits of holiness are like the forbidden fruit of Paradise, beautiful to the (*a*) Sight, "pleasant to the eyes;" (*b*) Taste, "good for food;" (*c*) Mind, "to be desired to make one wise." (Gen. iii. 6.) The ungraced soul can bear no good fruit.

*Indicia.*—I. "The river' (or torrent, *nachal*) of Thy pleasures (or delights, Ps. xxxvi. 8) is the delightful drink of spiritual grace, which comes to the soul (*a*) As a torrent, in mighty strength and abundance, flowing into the soul as a stream of such power, that (*b*) It removes all the obstacles of earthly thoughts and desires, purifying the soul by its course, and allowing no obstructions to remain which hinder its divine work; (*c*) Dissolving all the mire and clay which defile the desires, and affections, and bind them down to this present life." (Remigius. A.D. 950. in loco.)

II. A river is not stagnant or dead, but is called "living water." "So, therefore, spiritual grace is living water, the founts of which living waters are to be found in the Scriptures. These are the waters which Ezekiel (xlvi. 1, etc.) saw." (Radulph Flavian. A.D. 1140. in Levit. c. 10.)

III. If Grace be a river, it must flow in the valleys, amidst the humble souls; the proud, the high hills, remaining dry.

Therefore (Rom. xi. 20) humble the soul that it may be watered by the river of Grace. (S. Augustine DeVerb. Apost. Ser. ii.)

*Epilogue.*—This water must be taken within; it is an internal medicine.

### SERMON XIX.

(*First Sunday after Christmas.*)

*Evening Lesson.*

### THE PAST.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 15.

“ I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.”

*Introduction.*—“ Nothing that endures belongs to mortals ; all the happiness of the world, while it is held, is lost. For when the time of tribulation shall have come, all that is past is of no avail to sustain. Whence it was a foolish saying of Epicurus, who asserted, that the remembrance of past blessings mitigated present evils. Therefore Hezekiah said that he would ‘ go softly all his years,’ as thinking upon past blessedness in his present bitterness.” (S. Jerome in loco.)

The past thus acts upon the present to—

1. *Hallow it*—for the present contains the sum of the past, and it is consecrated by all the hopes and fears, sins and sorrows, that have gone before. So, therefore,

as we would have a hallowed future, we must have a holy and a loving present. A past life of sin leaves a degraded and an unhallowed present. In this way the past becomes for the future a (*a*) Prophecy, for as the past has been, so, in its recorded impressions, will the coming future be; (*b*) Preparation, either for heaven or hell: either for joy or eternal grief; (*c*) Nurse, treasure up the things of the present as in a treasury, to be expended upon the future. Hezekiah had been prosperous, and too confident. The memory of his past brightness would darken the more his present distress, whilst his over-confidence had induced the bitterness of soul. The "I shall go softly," is the translation of an expressive Hebrew word (*ladadah* which is only used in its reflexive conjugation, fut. Hithpael *eddadeh*), I shall go with a soft, gentle, and light step: all pride, and consequence, and boasting, is departed from me now. Seek we so to spend our present, that our future may be hallowed.

- ii. *Humbles it*—all might have been better, had the past been diligently and faithfully used. No one has ever realized his own ideal; all men have fallen so very far short of what they (*a*) Might have been; (*b*) Hoped to be; (*c*) Once tried to attain to. Therefore are the aged diffident, whilst the young are bold and

forward. It is not alone the weight of years, *i.e.*, physical decay, which oppresses the soul of those advanced in years, but the troubling memories of the past, so full of failures.

- III. *Discipline it*—The past has taught it such hard lessons. Time and life ; the world and experience are hard, stern, and pitiless schoolmasters : they make allowance for few failings. Esau's is but a too common case. (Heb. xii. 17.) The world seldom pardons.
- IV. *Support it*—as being the foundation upon which it rests. The foundation that Hezekiah had laid, being composed of temporal riches and greatness, for the most part, was but poor and sandy, and was therefore unable to bear the weight of the years which followed upon the laying of it. The foundation which the past lays ought to be (*a*) Broad, so that the house of the present may have room enough for its successive enlargements, spiritual, moral, and intellectual ; (*b*) Strong, able to sustain without any strain, the weight of the burdens of the coming years. The past, if its foundation had been strongly laid, would have been well able to bear up the present ; (*c*) Even, that the superstructure raised upon it may be fair, and of goodly proportions : an even past, makes a serene

and happy future. All these qualifications meet,  
and meet alone, in our Blessed Lord.

*Indicia.*—I.

“ Nessum maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria.”

(Dante, *Inf.* c. v.)

“There is no greater grief, than, in misery, to remind oneself of a happy time.” This was Hezekiah’s case, his past prosperity but added to the weight of his present grief, as memory vividly brought it before him.

II. How many have unconsciously echoed the prayer of old Evander, “Oh! if God would give back to me the years that are past!”; (*Vir. Æ.* viii. 560.) that He would make me that which I have been, but once again: what a higher, holier, and better use would I make of the years so sadly spent: years that have brought to me so little fruit. This regret is not in vain, if it lead to the present being more earnestly used.

*Epilogue.*—Remember the present of to-day will be the past of to-morrow.

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## SERMON XX.

(First Sunday after Christmas.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## THE PASSING LIFE.

ISAIAH XL. 6, 8.

"All flesh is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

*Introduction.*—"I do not think that it is void of significance that the prophet compares them who do evil, to grass. Surely there were other things which admitted of a like comparison. But grass is the food of dumb and irrational animals, therefore it represents the foolish and unlearned; those who live alike opposed to reason and to the wisdom of God. The prudent man is he who hears the words of the Lord and does them. He it is, who eats that bread which came down from heaven (S. John vi. 50), and Jesus is the food of him who feeds upon His words, and lives in His commandments. He who does not love the little flowers (*flosculos*) of the flesh, nor lives carnally, but who loves the Word of God, and profits by it, let him hear what he may hope for—"The word of our God shall stand for ever." (Origen. Hom. i. in Ps. xxxvi. Tom. i. p. 277, A:)

"All flesh is grass," for the body quickly dies, and with it dies its—

1. *Thoughts*—Those which belong to this present life

alone. So then there is an immortality in man. His "flesh" is indeed "grass," and all that is wholly bound up with it is perishable like it. Carnal and earthly thoughts will perish with the flesh, which gave them birth. Such thoughts, being of the flesh, are (a) Local, tied up to the place and circumstance of life; (b) Transitory, changing with every change in the bodily organism; (c) Limited to present needs and immediate surroundings. But "the word of our God," abiding within a man, "shall stand for ever," supplying the soul with food which is (a) Immortal; (b) Satisfying; (c) Spiritual and heavenly. Am I feeding the soul with thoughts of the flesh, or with the thoughts of the spirit? (Coloss. iii. 2.)

II. *Desires*—bound up with our bodily needs, hunger, etc.

The appetitive nature is ever strong in man. If it desires eternal things, the love of God, grace, wisdom, knowledge, then it will pass onwards from and through time, to eternity. That same desire which worketh death, is also a means for giving life. The desires of the flesh fail as grass; those founded upon "the word of God stand for ever."

III. *Deeds*—done for the flesh alone; our eating, marrying, etc. Deeds good, true, holy, and beautiful, live on

for ever in (a) Effect; (b) Memorial; (c) Reward.  
(Rev. xiv. 13.) "Follow them."

- iv. *Possessions*—of the flesh, beauty, strength, etc., soon pass away from us. The accidents of life, these are, things outside our true being. But all the possessions of the soul which are (a) Sanctified, by being devoted to the service of God, and by being concerned either in fulfilling the law of God, or in understanding the mysteries of His grace and love, shall live for ever; (b) Assimilated, and having so become a portion of the soul's true life and being, as much a part of it, as the dead food taken into the body becomes a part of its life and organisation, they are also eternal; (c) Inspired, as being the product of God the Holy Ghost working within; leading, as such thoughts do, to a higher revelation of God's mind and will, form part of that living "word of God which abideth for ever."

*Indicia.*—1. Behind the outward death of the body or flesh there lurks a hidden life; the blade of grass dies, but the living seat of reproduction remains. The poet saw in the leaves of the trees likewise an emblem of the race of men, "The wind scatters them on the ground, but the wood having budded, makes others to grow." (Hom. Il. vi. 147-8.) But the very blade, and the very leaf, wither away and die,

and, like the flesh, see corruption, albeit they furnish the elements out of which a new life may arise. The resurrection body will arise out of the dust of former flesh.

II. The thoughts, desires, deeds and possessions of the flesh may be classed under that "spirit of the flesh" (Rom. viii. 6) which is death, both as ending in nothing, and as separating the soul from God.

III. Why seek, O Christian soul, the perishable, when the immortality of eternal life (Origen. Prol. in Canct.) is within thy obtaining? Take the better, leave the worse; reach after immortality; feed upon eternal truth; take hold of eternal life; that so eternal joy, and light, may be thy final portion. Grass has its use; make the flesh a minister of the spirit, which lives by the "Word of our God."

*Epilogue.*—Living for Jesus, by Jesus, and in Jesus, we secure an immortality.

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## SERMON XXI.

(Second Sunday after Christmas.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS.

ISAIAH XLII. 3.

"A bruised reed shall He not break."

*Introduction.*—"In these [and the preceding words] the prophet shows His ineffable tenderness and power, and afterwards he points out His power, and the weakness of them" [the Jews.] (S. Chrysostom in Matt. Hom. xl. Tom. vii. p. 439, C.D.)

This inspired simile of the prophet sets forth the tenderness of Jesus in dealing with the penitent sinner. The sinner's soul is the "bruised reed," (1) Worthless; (2) Ugly, a broken, tangled mass of weed; (3) Helpless, wanting sap to rise up and revive it. Yet it is not dead; life still lingers in it. Not any of these sinful souls are worthless in Jesus' sight; He values them, they are not ugly to Him, He will give them all His help. Jesus deals with the sinful stricken soul—

- i. *Gently*—adding not one pang to its remorse, not one grain to its burden, not one throb to its sorrow; so tenderly, not cutting it off and casting it away as an offensive thing. Much as our Blessed Lord hated sin, He was ever very tender in His dealings with

penitent sinners. He tended and carefully lifted up the "bruised reed" of the broken heart of the penitent Magdalen, "She loved much," etc. (S. Luke vii. 47.) To "the woman taken in adultery," "Neither do I condemn Thee." (S. John viii. 11.) The Scribes, Pharisees, etc., were strongly reprov'd and condemn'd, but poor penitents received nothing but tenderness from His Hands. A tenderness this, of (a) Manner, encouraging and inviting confidence; (b) Speech, meeting sorrowing and needy souls more than half way with words of love and of mercy; (c) Action, forgiving them gently, and tenderly leading them back again to their true selves, to grace and hope. So should we temper love and mercy with justice to our fallen brethren.

- II. *Patiently*—giving it both time and place for repentance, waiting to be gracious unto it. For the "bruised reed," the broken soul, cannot right itself at once. The scars, stains, and bruises of sin are quickly made, but they take much time, and they need much patience ere they be cured. Our Blessed Lord expresses His own patience in the Parable, "Let it alone," etc. (S. Luke xiii. 8.)
- III. *Faithfully*—deluding it with no false hopes, shewing the soul its true condition, and leading it to its true and

only source of renewal and of pardon. He never pretends that the soul is not bruised, that the soul is not humbled and broken by sin. He allows and acknowledges the sin to the fullest extent : He probes the wound that it may be cured.

- iv. *Healingly*—He raises it up, comforts, and strengthens it. There is no half work with Jesus. If He pardons He restores. The prodigal son was brought back to more than he had lost. (S. Luke xv. 22, 23.) He does not half heal, and leave sin behind His work, for His precious blood “cleanseth from all sin.” (1 John i. 7.) Applying this, the Church is enabled to pronounce over the true penitent entire and perfect absolution. The power of sacramental grace is limited by the love of Jesus alone : His love and His work go hand in hand. Jesus heals because He loves, His tenderness is a form of His love. He heals the soul (*a*) Gradually, applying such discipline and medicine as it can bear ; (*b*) Surely, He knows what is in man, so that He cannot mistake the special form of each one’s disease ; (*c*) Savingly, for His healing is a restoration.

*Indicia*.—1. “Christian sailors, after a perilous voyage, on gaining their harbour, would not say, ‘I have saved the vessel,’ though each had used knowledge, thought and care,

but they would ascribe their deliverance to the tenderness of God. We, who do all that we can for our course of life, ascribe the true fruit of our labour, our salvation to Him."

(Origen. Peri Archon. lib. iii.)

II. "Tenderness is not what some philosophers deem it to be, merely sorrow for the misfortunes of others, but it is a certain feeling which would lead them to give help if possible." (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. iv. § 6.) The Tenderness of Jesus was shown in what He did, how He did it, and to whom He did it.

III. "The tenderness of Jesus is that of a shepherd, who, whilst He reproveth, chastizes and teaches His flock, deals gently and patiently with such souls as receive His discipline, and those who are apt to learn He invites to Himself." (S. Clem. Alex. Pæd. lib. i.) Not by His glory and majesty: not alone by His great work for man, but by His tenderness for man, Jesus becomes united with the faithful for time, and for eternity.

*Epilogue.*—Aim to remain not as a "bruised reed" when such gracious and ready help is nigh.

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## SERMON XXII.

(Second Sunday after Christmas.)  
*Evening Lesson.*

## REMEMBRANCE.

ISAIAH XLIII. 25.

“Put Me in remembrance.”

*Introduction.*—“‘Put Me in remembrance’ if you have anything which you can reasonably reply to Me, ‘let us plead together.’” (S. Jerome in loco. Heb. *hazkirani*, hiph. from *Zachar*, he remembered.)

This challenge which God throws down to Jacob we can apply to ourselves, bringing ourselves to self-examination, earnest, stern, and minute. Convert the words into a prayer—“Put me in remembrance,” O Lord! Try to remember for only one day all the—

1. *Actions*—great and small, trivial and important, done since the day began. How great will be the sum of those remembered! How much greater the sum of those forgotten! Such a remembrance of the actions of even one day would teach the lessons of (*a*) True humility, so many unworthy deeds would be recalled to mind; (*b*) Carefulness, lest to-morrow we offend as we offended to-day; (*c*) Resolution, to ask for grace and will, to strive to make the coming day better than the last; (*d*) Endeavour, by which such

good resolutions are carried out into good effect. Hence such a daily remembrance of actions would (a) Purify life from many of its failings; (b) Discipline it, to higher purposes and uses; (c) Ennoble it, by making it a preparation for the life to come.

- II. *Words*—idle words and good words, bad words, foolish words, wise words—beyond all power of recall. If it be difficult to remember the actions of a single day, how much more difficult is it to remember the words spoken throughout one day. We speak a hundred, nay, a thousand words to every action we perform. Yet words are more solemn than actions, for the effect of actions can often be counteracted, but the word once spoken, remains. Remembrance of our words, most imperfect as it is, brings home the solemn warning of our blessed Lord (S. Matt. xii. 36), leading to the prayer (Ps. cxli. 3).
- III. *Thoughts*—millions have passed through the brain, not to be remembered by tens even, each several one an index of the heart. The mind, whilst conscious, is ever thinking, and these thoughts are the parents of word and deed. Hence the fearful significance of S. Matt. xv. 18-21. "Thoughts are born within and remain there, and coming out, that is, proceeding to work and action, defile the man." (Theodoret.)

iv. *Of a whole life*—what the sum of thought, word and deed will be, opens a consideration too momentous to be expressed in words, this is to be felt only. The life is sum of all that we have ever hoped for, imagined, reasoned upon, of the transient impressions which are ever flitting over the brain, passing like a shadow so quickly away, and leaving no trace behind them. Number would fail to reckon up thoughts so many and so varied ; so light and easy in the conception of childhood, so sad and true when founded upon the sad experience of age. So too of words, from the innocent and unmeaning babble and prattle of childhood, to the weighed utterances of that wisdom that cometh with years. Less wonderful, but not less appalling, will be the chronicle of each action done by us from the cradle to the grave, when the end cometh and no more thought of the old kind, can fall to our portion, not one other syllable be spoken of the language of earth, no other deed be done by that body in the flesh. The end of a life of probation being come, the earthly work of the memory is closed for ever.

*Indicia.*—1. Memory, as being a great teacher of the soul, is the source of our highest and best conceptions, which arise out of a thoughtful study of the past, and therefore

rightly did the people of old call memory the "mother of the muses," as being a fertile source of inspiration to the soul.

II. Memory is also a scribe, which is ever writing its record on the soul (Plato. Phileb. 139 A), so that by means of memory, the soul becomes its own chronicler and its own witness either for, or against, itself. Hence the beauty of holiness, that this scribe may have to write upon the soul those affections, sensations, etc., which are pure, lovely, and of good report.

III. Memory is the preservation of that which hath been taken up (S. Greg. Naz. Orat. 26), whether as a conception, a learning, or a deed ; so it becomes a guardian ; warning, by the past, directing, to the future.

*Epilogue.*—Prepare for the day when all will be brought before you. O ! keep a daily register in the book of your soul.

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## SERMON XXIII.

(Second Sunday after Christmas.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## THE CLOUD OF SIN.

ISAIAH XLIV. 22.

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."

*Introduction.*—"Understand with the whole avidity of the mind, that as clouds, and mist, and fog are either dissolved by the heat of the sun, or are dissipated, the wind hurrying them away; so thy iniquities, and all the sins by which thou first displeased Me, I will cause to be dissolved."  
(S. Jerome in loco.)

The Protoplast was borne into a cloudless Paradise. He was the partaker of a sunlit soul. With sin, came the cloud, which—

1. *Hides*—the vision of God, shuts out the glimpses of heaven and of the spiritual world, just as natural cloud hides the fair and far off beauties of the material world that now is. On a cloudless day, standing on an eminence, the eye ranges afar over hill and dale, it may be from rocky peak to peak, over fertile valley, and vast plain, to gain in some places a gleam of silver on the horizon, the far off fringing of the surface of a sunlit sea. Cloud shuts

out the view of all this, and limits the landscape to small dimensions. Sin, a spiritual cloud, limits the spiritual vision, (a) Shutting out from the sight of the eye of the mind Heavenly things, which are now afar off : (b) Fixing its vision upon the lower things of time and life ; (c) Reducing all things, consequences, actions, thoughts, impressions, etc., to the same dull level.

- ii. *Darkness*—casting a dark shadow alike over faith and hope ; leading in its train both gloom and fear. Our blessed Lord came to be the light of the world, to drive out the gloom and darkness of error and doubt from men's minds. The cloud of sin darkens the understanding as to the (a) End, or issues of sin ; (b) Pleasures of sin ; (c) Power of sin, and the value of Satan's promises.
- iii. *Distorts*—the forms and distances of things, so leading to doubt, loss, and error of all kinds. Making things, in themselves beautiful, look ugly, and to the ugly things giving a new and a false aspect. The cloud leaves nothing in its true and real (a) Size, it either reduces or magnifies distance ; (b) Form, changing the aspect ; (c) Position, altering the relative position of all things within its range. Hence Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. If the cloud of sin did not

alter the shapes of things, sin, as being deformed and ungainly, would soon be shunned.

IV. *Preludes*—a coming storm, an out-pouring of judgment.

It is the gloom before the tempest, the darkening before the down-pour of the fierceness of the wrath of God. It settles upon the soul of the sinner with a dull heavy weight ; he may look upward, but no sight of heaven gladdens his eye ; around him all is sombre and gloomy, for the cloud so dense, must sooner or later break in wind, snow or rain ; it denotes hanging over him, the lull before the tempest. Wheresoever he may go, the cloud is with him, bringing with it threefold feeling of (*a*) Helplessness, being in a mightier hand than his own ; (*b*) Uncertainty, as what his future will be resolved into ; (*c*) Despair, since no escape, save by the lowly door of penitence, remains by which he can gain a better, brighter, and purer air. The pardon through the Precious Blood dispels the “thick cloud,” and turns the “cloud” into a guiding pillar of grace and glory.

*Indicia*.—1. “Four clouds fell upon man after the fall. The first of darkness : threatening, rising from the East, hiding the truth ; under which cloud Abel was slain, and the ram offered up instead of Isaac, prefiguring the mystery of the Incarnation. The second of dew : deceiving, appearing

from the South, which expresses the penitence of the philosophers, who, boldly disputing of heavenly things, invisible and unknown, as they would of sensible objects, attributing wisdom to themselves and not to God, therefore lost the true light. The third of hail: coming from the West, covering the light; the cloud of punishment, which, under the penal statutes of the old law, were pressing upon the necks of the Jews, making the law so harsh that it denied the attributes of God. The fourth is the cloud of the shadow of death: born in the North, and wanting in light, signifying those sins, the demands of which were stretching forth to death." (Peter De Blois. A.D. 1160.)

11. Clouds are dispersed by the sun: so when the sun of truth, goodness, and beauty shines, then flee away the clouds and their shadows. Jesus our sun is here, and in His light we see not cloud, but light, glorious and eternal.

*Epilogue.*—Pray for the shining into the soul of the "Sun of Righteousness," which will dissipate every cloud, and make you "light in the Lord."

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## SERMON XXIV.

*(First Sunday after the Epiphany.)**Morning Lesson.***FAITH—A COURT OF APPEAL.**

ISAIAH LI. 1.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn."

*Introduction.*—"Was not Abraham a barbarian? Was it not true (Gen. xviii. 11, 12)? Were not all things with him desperate? How could he fill the world? Why are you disturbed, for if, of one (Heb. xi. 12), how much more will He not fill Jerusalem? If they (the Jews) expect that they will recover their city, much more is there need of faith to us, who look for heaven. When, therefore, there is anything great that exceeds the understanding, and is above the reason, we ought to accept this, and not to examine the matter according to the human manner. For the wonder-working of God is above all these things, so that on this account we ought to give glory to God, and to run to faith, reasoning being curbed." (S. Chrysostom in Ps. cxv. Tom. v. p. 309. B.D.)

Faith ought to be to the soul a court of appeal, which is—

1. *High*—having God's Holy Spirit for its judge, and saints and angels for attendants and witnesses. The High Court of Faith is sublime and august, the assessors of which are God the Holy Ghost, the

Word of God, and their inspirations working through the Church. These judges are (a) All wise, nothing is beyond the range of their powers and capacities ; (b) All searching, for they see, know, and scan, all the thoughts and intents of the soul ; (c) All just, weighing every conception, inspiration, or doubt in a balance which is absolutely just and true. The causes tried in this court, the matters with which faith deals, are (a) Spiritual, relating to the deeper mysteries of this life, and connecting it with the eternal life of glory ; (b) Future, having relation to God's revelation of the future state ; (c) High, the glory of the redeemed, and the realization of the beatific vision.

- II. *Pure*—guided by the revelation of the Spirit of Truth. All impurity, from the fall downwards, is associated with the senses and matter, but the objects of faith are both above and beyond reason as well as sense. This court of appeal is pure, being presided over by pure judges, and dealing with pure causes.
- III. *Needful*—so much lies beyond the promise of reason. So much is now seen in enigma. (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) “The shadows of things to come” are determined by this court, which bids us put away “the symbols of a despotic body” (Theod.), clearing doubt, placing

“the hypostasis of things hoped for” upon a firmer basis.

- iv. *Final*—for this life, till faith is lost in sight. It is the highest court of appeal for the enquiring mind. Its decrees overrule the dictates of (*a*) Reason, not by contradicting it, or by doing despite to its true and legitimate deductions, but by passing wholly beyond it. I gaze with a naked eye upon the starry heavens, and rightly count, by reason, all the stars which the vision can behold ; I scan the same heavens with a telescope, and hundreds of new lights come into view. Faith is this telescope, applied to revelation, to the “great sacrament” of Godliness in all its fulness, it exceeds the reason, which, being an inferior power, cannot rightly dispute its decree ; (*b*) Final, as deciding against probabilities, for human conclusions are founded upon imperfect data, so that events, which seem to the reason to be improbable, are certainties to faith, which so much the more “sees before and after.” The improbabilities of man are often the certainties of God ; (*c*) Final, as giving judgment against desert, opening out the infinite depth of the love and mercy of Jesus, and the vast resources of grace and pardon which lie waiting for use in the Precious Blood. Reason, will, memory, knowledge, affection,

imagination, and the like, must humble themselves before faith.

*Indicia.*—I. “Faith,” sings the poet (Proclus. Hymn in Solem), “is the bringer up of souls,” guiding and training them whilst they “walk by faith.” It pronounces judgment for or against the pleadings of a holy, but still a wild and wayward heart. The soul rests satisfied with the decision of its bringer-up (*anagogeus*).

II. The very nature of faith signifies “a quiet assent.” (S. Greg. Naz. Car. Jamb. ii. 40.) A court from which there can be no appeal. The soul in which dwells true faith, accepts the guiding inspirations of God the Holy Ghost, as delivered in the oracles of His Church, without a murmur, without a question ; accepts them at once, and unreservedly and implicitly, yielding to no other authority.

III. “Faith is an infallible energy or operation.” (S. Clem. Alex. Pæd. lib. i. c. 13.) The mind cannot but submit to it as to a court of appeal.

*Epilogue.*—To this court carry all doubt and difficulty.

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## SERMON XXV.

(First Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## UNSELFISHNESS.

ISAIAH LIII. 3.

"A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief."

*Introduction.*—"According to an economy, He is grieved, and is in anguish, that it might be believed that He was truly man." (Theophylact in loco.)

"He endured all things that He might liberate us from all; if he had not sorrowed, our own sorrows would not have ceased." (S. Cyril of Alexandria, "Thesaurus" lib. x. c. 3.)

For us our Blessed Lord "was made man;" for us He suffered; for us He died. His unselfishness is—

1. *Loving*—it sprang from the infinite depths of His own most loving heart. He "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20);—gave away, sacrificed Himself for me. Unselfishness may spring from pure and good motives, and yet not from love to another, but from a resolution to discipline self, from the desire to make some great atonement for the past, or from a natural carelessness and disregard of self. Not so with Jesus, His unselfishness was but an expression of His love; it corresponds to His love in (a) Depth; (b) Fulness; (c) Condescension. If we

can fathom His love, then we can gauge His unselfishness.

- II. *Settled*—not the impulse of a moment, it expressed a council of His eternity, the settled purpose of His earthly life. It worked upon the Lord afar off, whilst dwelling in light and in glory. We compassionate misery which we see, and know about, because of its being near to us, and so we may make an unselfish sacrifice to relieve it ; but He gave up His soul to and for man, in intention, whilst He was yet in the eternity of past time, and under other conditions, such as space and being ; whilst He was widely separated from man. Such unselfishness as this, must be the result of a principle which was (a) Individual, forming part of His very nature ; (b) Firm, to be shaken by the thought of no self-sacrifices ; (c) Planned and worked out, as a living purpose, by His own loving heart.
- III. *Perfect*—wanting in no one respect and particular. We search over the records of His most Holy life to try and find wherein it failed. We try in vain. It was perfect in its (a) Conception ; (b) Execution ; (c) Application to our needs, and to our stricken, sin-ridden and sorrow-ridden soul.
- IV. *Unlimited*—not even bounded by death, but is continued

now in His intercessional office. For He is "Jesus Christ the same," etc. (Heb. xiii. 8), unlimited in power, duration, and expression. His unselfishness is not even limited by our need—but by His gracious recognition of what man was once, of what man now is, of what man may become again. For man, an eternity rises up in His soul, unlimited existence or being, unlimited progression and advancement in heavenly places, unlimited capacities of joy and glory, all of which should flow from Himself to man. So that the unselfishness of Jesus was unlimited in (a) His conception, of what man, bearing "the image of the heavenly," might attain unto when the disturbing factors of sin and death were eliminated once and for ever from his being; (b) His fulfilment, of all that was required to effect man's full, free, and perfect deliverance from the empire of Satan: for his rescue was to be effected, and reconciliation made by Him between God and man, let the cost be what it might; (c) His forbearance, towards those who despise His call, and count the Blood of His Covenant an unholy thing. Had His patience been in ever so small a degree subject to limitation, He would have left off His work, when, having come to His own, He found that they received Him not.

*Indicia.*—I. The old heathen world of the Roman had no one word by which to express selfishness or its opposite. The love of self stood for the first, and the want of self-love for the second. The Greek expressed the same definition in one compound word (*φιλανθρία*). Our blessed Lord brought into this world by His utter unselfishness a new conception of life, and it being new, there was no word in use to signify such a putting away of self, as was for the first time in the world's history shown by Him in His dealings with man. In this, as in many of His other attributes, His life became a "new creation."

II. Love is the ground and foundation of unselfishness, for "it conquers all things, and drives through or eludes things that are terrible." (S. Chrysost. Hom. L. in Matt.) "For one that loves, although He may be hated, and insulted, and even slain, remains loving;" (S. Chrysost. Hom. lxii. In Matt.) so thoroughly does love remove all selfishness from the heart, and the intense unselfishness of our Blessed Lord sprung from His intense love.

III. Selfishness is the beginning and fountain of all sin, the forerunner of Antichrist, for it will flourish when he shall reign, and the children, of which it is the parent, are described. (2 Tim. iii. 2.) Contrast with these (1 John iii. 16.) (Lanuza.)

*Epilogue.*—Such an unselfish life as this carries with it its own reward and glory.

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## SERMON XXVI.

*(First Sunday after the Epiphany.)**Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## THE SCHOOL OF GOD.

ISAIAH LIV. 13.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

*Introduction.*—"The prophetic word, 'all,' is not to be taken absolutely, but it signifies those who are willing. For the Master sits before all, ready to furnish of such things as He hath, to pour out upon all His teaching." (S. Chrysost. Hom. xlv. in Joannem. Tom. viii. p. 270. B.)

"'All,' it is plain, signifies those who are willing." (Ammonius. in Catenæ on S. John.)

They who are willing to be taught "of God," that is, to be instructed in the things of God, must come to the school of God, to the Church of God, in which they can be taught by (1) Sacrament; (2) Worship; (3) Preaching, by God's own appointed teachers. This "School of God" is—

1. *Free*—without money or price, open to all. Gates wide open and without restriction, all are admitted to learn. For the Catholic Church is the Gospel in its concrete form. It is the Body of Christ (Eph. i. 23), and the fulness of Christ. All the sacramental channels of grace are free to all, since the work of Jesus is for the whole world. In human schools,

that are perfectly free and open, there are still certain restrictions as to age or attainments, etc., so "the School of God" demands of all her children, as conditions of pupilship, (*a*) Baptismal admission, as being the only door to the earthly kingdom of grace; (*b*) Sacramental Communion, without which there cannot be Church membership; (*c*) Penitential submission, the confession of and the absolution for sin.

- ii. *Large*—for the Church is Catholic, and extends throughout all the world. So large that the great "School of God" has to be broken up into many separate class-rooms, worship in some being carried on in the Latin, in others in the Greek language, in others in the vernacular; the worshippers being broken up into convenient sections, yet all being members of that "one body," holding a succession, and ministered to by the threefold orders of Bishop, priest and deacon.
- iii. *Voluntary*—no one is forced into it; some, alas, are still without it. All are invited, none are compelled to come in. Rejection works no harm to the Church, but it entails infinite loss to the rejecting soul. Over such an one the Church grieves (*a*) Lovingly; (*b*) Prayerfully; (*c*) But not despairingly, for its own sad case.

iv. *Endowed*—not with money and lands, but with God the Holy Ghost. As a Church, that is, being a vast spiritual corporation, local branches may be rich or poor in material wealth, but the Holy Catholic Church, as such, is rich in grace, and perhaps is never richer than when most poor, for her riches are spiritual, and not temporal : she is the representative of a Kingdom which is not of this world. The Church is rich in (*a*) Gifts of grace : in the perpetual Presence of her Great High Priest at the Sacrament of the Altar, and from that sacred presence flows all her grace of pardon and of healing, her powers of binding and loosing, of improving the grace of regeneration ; (*b*) Souls rescued by her means, and translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light ; in all her multitude of witnesses, who having passed into the world unseen, are waiting, under the throne, a vast concourse, for the fulfilment of that number by which they will be made perfect, souls called by her ministrations to be heirs of glory in heavenly places ; (*c*) Knowledge and good works. compared with the fathers of the Church and her great doctors, as very babes in the science of the saints, are the different sectarian teachers of varied degrees of heresy, who out of communion with the Catholic

Church, dabble in so-called "theology." The Church, as being inspired by God the Holy Ghost, is the one repository of evangelical truth, the one propounder and lawful expositor of the catholic faith.

*Indicia.*—I. The Church is "The School of God," since Jesus saith, "I am the Good Shepherd" (S. John x. 11), using a metaphor. "He who is the teacher of the children is considered to be a Pedagogue, Who is rightly called the Word, Who leads us children to salvation: and the teaching is the fear of God, being the understanding of the service of God, and instruction in regard to the knowledge of the truth." (S. Clem. Alex. Pæd. 1. c. 7.)

II. S. Mary Magdalene was an apt scholar in this divine and holy school. How did she receive instruction? She was a pupil who was (*a*) Reverential, "She sat at Jesus' feet," acknowledging fully the divine authority, inspiration, and power; (*b*) Attentive, for she "heard His words," listening eagerly lest a syllable should escape her; (*c*) Humble, being at His Feet, lowly waiting, there revealing a disposition teachable, gentle, and apt to learn. (S. Luke x. 39.)

III. The school of God is a school of discipline as well as of learning: a school that by trial perfects its pupils.

*Epilogue.*—Your crown of rejoicing, "I am taught of God; I am a pupil in the school of God; I am a faithful child of the Church."

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## SERMON XXVII.

(Second Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## GOD'S BUYERS.

ISAIAH LV. I.

"Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat."

*Introduction.*—"If we have neither gold, nor silver, nor money, how can we buy? He hath told us when He said, 'come ye,' for they buy this highest good by the effectual will of desiring to come. O! the Divine clemency, for what means it to say 'come ye,' save that He wishes all to come, and that He rejects no one? God did not say, 'come ye' if you are beautiful, learned, or of good blood. But He says, 'come ye' all, for I desire you all. I assign a price to so great a thing, one which you all possess, and which is ready to hand and easy to be paid; and this is the will or desire." (Diez. Conciones. Tom. iv. p. 383. B.C.)

In order that we obtain or "buy" the things of God a desire is needed, which is—

- I. *Sincere*—springing from pure and holy sense of imperfections. "The waters" form the river of God (Ps. xlvi. 4), of which the Lord spake to the woman of Samaria (S. John iv. 4-14), to which He invited all to come (S. John vii. 37). They signify the Holy

Ghost, "of whom the Prophet was resounding in mystical speech." (Ps. xlii. 2.) (S. Jerome.) The traveller has had a long march, he is weary and thirsty, spent and worn; at last he comes upon a spring of water, he is refreshed thereby, strengthened and enlightened. We, travellers along the desert of this world, must long for, and feel our need of God's grace, just as the traveller feels his need of the material water. The soul is stricken at a sense of its own weakness and insufficiency, it knows and laments its barrenness and dryness. That it may become more worthy, better, and purer, and holier. whilst it laments its imperfections, it sincerely desires the waters of divine grace.

- II. *Strong*—the one desire or wish before all others. Not granted unless this be the case. Without thirst no one would care to drink. Until ignorance is felt, there is no desire for knowledge; until sin is felt, there is no desire for holiness. Strong desire is the parent of all energy and work in the world.
- III. *Sustained*—not in the soul to-day, and gone to-morrow. How then explain S. John iv. 14? If the water, the grace, once quaffed, quenches thirst or desire for ever, how can the desire be sustained? This water of grace both creates the desire and supplies

the need. So in heaven there will be ever longing, and ever satisfaction.

- iv. *Confident*—that what is longed for includes every blessing. For faith must ever precede experience. Once tasted, both doubt and faith are passed by. For grace, when known in its fulness and freshness, realizes the conceptions, and satisfies the thirst of the soul. Real desire is founded upon a confidence in the desirability of the thing longed for. Man never desires pain, sorrow, sickness, poverty or death; he has no confidence in these things; rather he distrusts them altogether, looks upon them as his enemies, and with aversion. When the desire exists, it implies a confidence that the object wished for is a blessing and not a curse. A confident desire for heavenly things, expresses a belief that they are (*a*) Worthy of this exercise of the heart and will, whilst as yet unknown and unproved; (*b*) Needful to the soul's present estate and condition, that they will furnish it with spiritual food; (*c*) The best possible things, so that nothing can be desired which are more true, noble, and lasting than they are.

*Judicia.*—I. Job expresses his petition in the form of a desire (xxxix. 35), for "the true pleading is indeed not in the voices of the mouth, but in the thoughts of the

heart ; for the stronger voices, which enter into the most sacred ears of God, form not our words, but our desires." (S. Odo. Abbat, A.D. 1130, Moral Lib. 22 in Job.) It is this fact which explains their power to buy or obtain from God what the heart seeks. Voiceless, (1 Sam. i. 13) did the desire of Hannah obtain from God a full answer to the yearning of her heart.

II. Words are the voices of the body, but " desires are the words themselves of souls, for if the desire was not a word, David would not have said, 'Lord, Thou hast heard the desire.' (Ps. x. 17.)" (Ambrosius Ansbert, A.D. 770, in Apo. lib. iv.) The soul speaks more truly deeply than the body, therefore are its words of power and import.

III. Desire is so acceptable with God because it does not spring from the body. The thirsty man desires replenishment because he feels the thirst, but he does not feel, he only apprehends the replenishment. It is the mind that apprehends desire which belongs altogether to the soul. (Plato. Philb. 35. B.C.D.) When the desire, therefore, goes out towards God, it is a going out of soul, it is a reaching forth to Him of the real nature.

*Epilogue.*—The will, the true self, this is all that man can give to God, and this He accepts in His infinite love and mercy.

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## SERMON XXVIII.

(Second Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## THE MESSENGERS OF SIN.

ISAIAH LVII. 9.

"Thou didst send thy Messengers far off."

*Introduction.*—These "messengers" or ambassadors are sinful thoughts. The word in the original signifies a "hinge" (*Tsir-rayeh*, Thy legates, from *Tsir*, a hinge), for as the ingress or egress depends upon the hinge, so do the relations between the several countries depend upon their respective ambassadors. Moreover the hinge only allows the door to open to a certain extent; and ambassadors cannot act beyond the sphere of their instructions from home. The sinful soul, like the Jews of old, sends forth its evil thoughts; "its messengers, partly excited by the instigations of the devil, and partly as they arise from the motion of the will." (Gennad. Massi. de Eccles. Dog. c. 83.) "When these are sent out, there are many but too ready to receive them, such as voluntarily offer themselves to sin, not even waiting for temptation, but anticipating the will." (S. August. de Pœnit, c. 5.) Hence the contagion of sin, for these ambassadors, from the darkness within a man, find many kindred souls prepared for their reception; and so they issue forth in vast array to spread out their counsel far and near, not known at first,

not till they are recognised, when too late, by their fruits. Imagination and evil desire, these evil messengers, go out "afar off," having assumed forms which are—

- i. *Pleasing*—so captivating, and delighting the senses. There are two sides to our being, nature and grace ; the old man and the new (Rom. vi. 6) ; "He called the old man, not the nature, but a wicked mind or imagination." (Theodor.) S. Chrysost. (on Coloss. iii. 9) beautifully shows that the expression "old man" does not imply substance of body, but choice or election of mind ; "old" because this choice, these pictures of sin, produced by imagination and desire, are deformed, hideous, and imbecile : they appeal to our passions, to the lower and baser faculties of our nature. Born of self, of the corrupt part of self, these pictures of sin are the product of the worship of self instead of the worship of God. They are an example of self pandering to self, and so giving evil pleasure, instead of pain, as they ought to do.
- ii. *Seducing*—leading the soul away from all that is holy and good. These messengers of the fancy, these pictures of sin, as pleasing the lower, the appetitive, faculties, naturally weaken and seduce the higher ones, directing their (a) Desire ; (b) Gaze ; (c) Effort, to what is worthless and base, and bringing them down to con-

sider such things as concern them to be the one end and aim of their being, leading the soul with themselves along the lower way which leads to hell.

- III. *Domineering*—ruling over the entire man with an iron hand. The messengers of sin getting the mastery ; these products of “the old man” become very bitter tyrants, till they at last gain a rule over the entire man, which is (*a*) Absolute and tyrannical ; (*b*) Degrading, as depriving it of free will and voluntary action ; (*c*) Fatal, as plunging the soul into a depth whence there is no escape.
- IV. *Deceiving*—giving a false colour and value to that which ends in utter loss, misery, and death. It is only by their false representations that they gain a hearing, were their true nature, purpose, and end known, these “messengers,” these ambassadors of sin, might be sent out, but they would be sent “far off” in vain. Sin is very ugly in itself, it is horrible in its effects upon the soul and the life : it is most fearful when, “having been consummated, it bringeth forth death.” (S. Jam. i. 15.) If we saw sin now, as we shall see it some day, as it is seen by God and His Holy Angels, we should flee from it in disgust and terror, but sin, like Satan, transforms itself into an angel of light, going forth from the false and evil conceptions of the soul

to deceive others as well as ourselves, by (*a*) Pretensions to power and influence which are unfounded, "All these things will I give unto thee" (S. Matt. iv. 9), is the vaunt of sin; (*b*) Promises, which are false, of happiness, of freedom from punishment, which are unfounded, "Thou shalt not surely die" (Gen. iii. 4); (*c*) Pretexts and excuses which will not bear the light, for "the fire shall try every man's work." (1 Cor. iii. 13.)

*Indicia.*—I. These "messengers" or ambassadors are voluntary agents on our part. They are in our power, either to be sent forth or restrained. "In our power is conception, desire, endeavours, turnings away, in a word, whatsoever are our works." (Epict. Enchir. c. 1.) As creatures of free will we are free agents in this respect.

II. "These messengers destroy both the senders and the receivers of them: for such a soul is an evil heart, out of which evil things are sent forth. In this case, lose the soul to find it; this a man does by repentance, which begets knowledge of self." (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. vi. c. 6.)

*Epilogue.*—As these messengers are voluntary (Prov. iv. 23), guard the "issues," goings out, or fountains of the soul, (*a*) Continually; (*b*) Zealously, lest any slip by un-awares; (*c*) Minutely; (*d*) Prayerfully.

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## SERMON XXIX.

(Second Sunday after the Epiphany.)  
*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION.

ISAIAH LXI. 10.

“He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.”

*Introduction.*—“What is this salvation, save our Christ? What is it, therefore, this ‘He hath clothed me,’ etc.? ‘As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’ (Gal. iii. 27.)” (S. Augustine, Enarr. in Ps. cxxxii.)

“He who is clothed in any garment, is both protected and covered by it, and he appears moreover in the colour of the garment, his own natural colour being hidden. So likewise he who puts on Christ, is protected and covered by Him, and nothing appears in him save the things of Christ. (Rom. xiii. 14.) As kindled wood is clothed with fire, and partakes of the attributes of fire, so he who is clothed with Christ partakes of His graces.” (S. Thomas Aquinas. Lection 9, in Gal. iii.)

These garments of salvation represent the “new man” (Eph. iv. 24), they are—

1. *New*—since they indicate a new name, nature and position. (Zech. iii. 3, 4.) Joshua, in his filthy garments, is a type of the unregenerate sinner. So

when the iniquity was to pass from him, he was clothed with "a change of raiment," of which the white baptismal robe was typical. Every single thought and desire may be considered in the light of a certain clothing of the soul; so when, by divine grace, these thoughts and desires become new, the soul can be said to be clothed with a new garment. In the world we dress our bodies according to our duties, callings, and station of life. We use certain official dresses when holding certain official offices. So the Christian (2 Cor. v. 17), for he hates the garments spotted by the flesh (S. Jude 23), should see that this new garment of salvation be not (a) Defiled, by sin; (b) Torn, by the brambles of this world's love; (c) Imperfectly put on, by carelessness of life.

- II. *Beautiful*—in themselves, as embracing all grace and goodness. (Rev. xix. 8.) That is, it was granted to her to be clothed with her deeds, as it is written. (Ps. cxxxii. 9.) (Tichonius, A.D. 370, in loco.) These spiritual "garments of salvation" are therefore beautiful, as being (a) Pure and white; (b) The garments of the glorified; (c) The livery of the great King.
- III. *Becoming*—as hiding the wearer's former sins. (a) Covering over every imperfection (Ps. xxxii. 1),

“covered”; (*b*) Conforming the wearer to the holy ;  
 (*c*) Consecrating him to the service of God.

- iv. *Needful*—as being a mark of sonship here, and the wedding garment of the kingdom of heaven (S. Matt. xxii. 12, 13) hereafter. As a court dress is to be put on when going to court, for the King would cast out (*a*) Immediately ; (*b*) Severely, with punishment ; (*c*) Finally, those without it, from His presence and from His kingdom all such as are not suitably attired. Soiled robes would be unsuitable and out of place amidst the white robes of the glorified, even if they could be admitted there, and the wearer of such would be weighed down with a sense of his inferiority, which would mar his joy and happiness. Such garments would also betoken a due want of homage and respect both to the King and to His glorified subjects. Rather, those who are not clad in “the garments of salvation” would not be permitted to enter into His court. They are needful as (*a*) A passport to His august presence and court ; (*b*) As showing that a due preparation has been made for the coming into His courts ; (*c*) To enable the wearer to take up his fitting place and station amidst the ranks of the elect.

*Indicia*.—1. Our robe is the work of righteousness (Ps.

cxxxii. 16), and it is equally for honour and use, by which a good report is obtained is gained without ; and within before God it gives the answer of a good conscience. Linen and wool formed the old Levitical vestments. Linen, very fine, signifying the spiritual work of holiness ; wool, the outward corporal deeds of love and mercy. In both kinds there is a warp of good intention, and a woof of earnestness of work. (Radulph Faviac, A.D. 960, in Lev. lib. iv, c. 9.) Holiness therefore forms the soul's "garment of salvation."

II. Both Elijah and S. John Baptist were clad in rough garments, the one with a girdle bristly with hairs, and the other in camel's hair, which signify that the soul must be clothed in fasting and humiliation, that is, in the garment of spiritual abstinence, such as David speaks of to the Lord. (Ps. cxix. 101.) (S. Paulinus, A.D. 390, Epist. x. ad Severum.) "The garments of salvation" clothe the soul in discipline, obedience, and self-restraint.

III. The garments cast before the Lord (S. Matt. xxi. 8) signify virtues which were united with grace. (Rom. v. 2.) The strewing in the way, being those open Christian graces which shine before men. (Titus Bostrensis, A.D. 350, in Ramis palm.) These garments are both holy and manifest.

IV. When the garments of salvation are torn and rent by sin, the openings therein reveal the hidden shame of the

soul. (S. Clem. Alex. Pædag. lib. ii. c. 2.) Sin is revealed by the soul's tattered covering.

*Epilogue.*—Take off, by contrition and repentance, the garments spotted by the flesh. Seek, by sacramental communion with Jesus, and by gaining the gifts and graces of God the Holy Ghost, to be clad in the white robes of the righteousness of Jesus, in which His bride will be brought to Him. (Eph. v. 27.)

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SERMON XXX.

(Third Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

THE REWARD OF THE HOLY.

ISAIAH LXII. II.

“Behold His reward is with Him.”

*Introduction.*—“Behold thy Salvation cometh,’ who in the Hebrew language is called Jesus. Whence also Gabriel to Joseph. (S. Matt. i. 21.) Which ‘salvation’ of the believing, is the Judge of all, that He may reward every man according to his works. (S. Matt. xvi. 27.) Rewards to the just, eternal punishments to sinners.” (S. Jerome in loco.)

“This also (S. Matt. xvi. 27) the Lord said, not only reminding sinners of punishment, but those who have walked rightly, of their rewards and crowns. But He indeed said

these things in order that He might win over the good." (S. Chrysostom in loco.) Even now, when Jesus comes to us by His Spirit, through His Sacraments and Word, He brings a reward with Him, joy and peace in believing, etc. At His second coming His reward will be—

1. *Earned*—the notion contained in the word reward (*βραβειον*) is that of a prize given for a successful strife, a prize of victory. In like manner that final reward will have been earned by those who through faith and patience shall inherit the promises. (Heb. vi. 12.) It will be earned by (*a*) Service, the faithful devoted service which hath been given to the Lord ; and, as such, it will form the wages when the work of the day of life shall have been finished. (S. Matt. xxv. 21.) "Servant ;" (*b*) Endurance, not giving way to opposition, or to faintness by the way (S. Matt. x. 22), "but he having endured to the end, and who is not in the beginning only, will be a partaker of eternal life," (Theophy.) ; (*c*) Patience, by waiting the Lord's leisure, without the fretful wish to hurry the hidden purposes of God (Rom. ii. 7), "for the labour is for a season, but the reward is eternal." (Theodor.) May life be a day of earning.
11. *Personal*—as applied to man's true self, and not to things without. (S. Matt. xvi. 27.) "Every man,"

*i.e.*, "shall pay back to each." "According to the works, He will judge each one." (Theophy.) The reward will be suited to each individual soul, the counterpart to personal and individual labour and holiness, sorrow and joy: sin and holiness, temptation and triumph, are each and all, personal and particular; a recognition of man's individuality.

- III. *Full*—leaving nothing either to be desired or capable of increase. If it were not full and perfect, if imperfect, it would be unworthy of God's bestowal: but even then it would be greater than man's earning, far above anything that man had any right either to hope for or to expect. Although it has to be earned, there is no "common measure" between the work and the wages: between the poor, feeble, and insignificant service that man renders to God, and the infinite recompense with which such service is accepted. The reward is full in relation to (a) Man's capacities of reception; (b) God's sense of perfectness; (c) The new conditions of life and glory under which man will then be placed.
- IV. *Lasting*—ours, when they are once given, not again to be withdrawn. God's providence assigns temporal rewards to us, various successes and prosperities of life, to cheer us up during our journey along the road

of life : temporal rewards, as suitable to our being in time. His final rewards will be lasting, so as to correspond with the eternity of our final state or condition. This lasting nature of the reward brings with it a sense of (*a*) Security, it cannot be taken away, it is like Mary's "good part," (S. Luke x. 42), "for the gain of spiritual blessings is never lost." (S. Cyril. Alex. in loco.) In this respect they stand in striking contrast with the transitory nature of all earthly things ; (*b*) Enjoyable, as having no dark shadow of deprivation to follow in their train ; (*c*) Unsatiabie : many earthly blessings lose their value after a time, they are tired of : not so with the reward of the holy, ever-continued it is ever new. The longer it is enjoyed, the more is it delighted in.

*Indicia.*—I. "If you wish to sustain labour, attend to the reward" (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. xxxvi. 23) ; set the prize before you ; looking at the crown you will not fear to bear the Cross. Both the labour and the reward are of divine grace ; yet the promise of obtaining a recompense, does for the Christian that which the temporal promises of an earthly Canaan did for the Jew of old : making toil to be sweet, and endurance blessed : consecrating every form of suffering, knowing (2 Cor. iv. 17.) There is a healthful stimulus in reward.

II. Not simply according to his work, but according to the labour of his work ; (1 Cor. iii. 8.) *i.e.*, the effort which the work costs. Some could perform a hundred works, easier than others could do two or three ; in some natures habit and circumstance lead to goodness : in others they tend in the contrary direction. (Theodor. in loco.) Hence the promise is “to Him that overcometh.” (Rev. ii. 7, 17 ; iii. 5, 12, 21.)

III. “The reward is salvation,” (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. 1, b. iv. § 6), for time and for eternity.

*Epilogue.*—Seek to gain the reward hereafter, by earning it now in this the time of work, sorrow, and trial.

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### SERMON XXXI.

(Third Sunday after the Epiphany.)  
*Evening Lesson.*

### UNBELIEF.

ISAIAH LXV. 1.

“I am found of them that sought Me not.”

*Introduction.*—Why was it that the Jews, who “were educated in the prophetic books,” who knew the prophecies of Moses concerning the Advent of Christ : who saw the Lord Himself, His miracles, and who heard His words : to whom He specially came, and bade His disciples cleave

(S. Matt. x. 5), should have remained so dull and so blind? Why was it, that the Gentiles, worshippers of idols, believers in dreams, with immoral gods, and leading worse lives themselves, having fallen into the depths of wickedness; suddenly, as if by a certain device, appeared above us, shining through the height of heaven itself?" S. Paul answers these questions. (Rom. x. 3; ix. 30.) "Unbelief was the cause of all the evils of the Jews: this begat folly (*ἀπρόνοια*), from which they lapsed into envy (*βασκάνια*), and hence they could not bear the notion of the vast and ineffable philanthropy of God, and hence proceed boasting, knavishness (*πονηρία*), and hatred." (S. Chrysost. in Joann. Hom. ix.)

From all this we learn that unbelief—

1. *Darkens*—the understanding, and shuts out the light of truth. Imagine the world, and the world's knowledge to be in dusk, or twilight, and the understanding of man to partake of the nature of his surroundings. Faith is a power, or a kind of instrument, which enables the eye of the soul to penetrate beyond the surrounding gloom; to gaze as by telescopic vision into a region more fair and more glorious than ever mortal eye can fathom without its aid. Belief is a spiritual telescope to the soul, and the sun which this telescope sights, is the sun of truth. Or again, belief may be compared to wings, which lift the

soul into a higher region than reason dare to follow after it. Both similitudes point to the fact that unbelief darkens the understanding by preventing it from looking (*a*) Clearly; (*b*) Attentively; (*c*) Lovingly, into the region of light and revelation.

- II. *Hardens*—the heart, and incapacitates it from receiving impressions. S. John (xii. 40) unites blinded eyes with a hardened heart: for the darkened eyes of the soul, like those of the body, are rendered incapable of receiving impressions which are (*a*) Tender and gentle; (*b*) Rapid, soon come and go; (*c*) Sublime. Unbelief and ignorance are the progenitors of hardness, or denseness, of heart and of head.
- III. *Breeds sin*—pride of intellect, hatred of the Gospel, and the many chimeras of the dusk and twilight, in which the soul lives: also by putting nature for grace; and opinion above revelation and knowledge.
- IV. *Entails infinite and eternal loss*—admitting of no replacement. The whole spiritual world, with all its mighty marvels, is shut out from a soul in unbelief. A loss immense, even for this life, which is rich in many a sight of love, joyfulness, and grace, for such as have the eyes to see. The visions, which are opened by faith, even if they were unreal, are of no

slight value, if they help the soul to nobly bear the burden of life : to support sorrow and sickness with sweetness and resignation, if in any way they give cheer to the journey, and travail of time, and lighten the weight of the years. But of how much greater value will they be, when all mists shall be cleared up, and the eye of the soul shall be, by perfect purification, fitted to behold the Beatific Vision in its ineffable fulness and glory. The loss which unbelief inflicts is infinite and eternal in (a) The objects themselves, which are thus hidden from the soul, and which can only be perceived by a firm faith, the love of Jesus, sacramental grace, His perpetual intercession by His pleading through the sacrifices offered upon our altars ; (b) the consequences of not seeing : a vision of glory, hope, and promise, open for others, but not for those in unbelief, coupled with certain deprivations and certain punishments, to last for ever beyond the grave ; (c) The contrast between the "blessed eyes" that see, and the closed, mole-like eyes of incredulity which believe not.

*Indicia.*—I. "Faith is not conception, the willing approval of proof beforehand, but an assent to something strong ; unbelief, a conception of its opposite, a sickly negative." (ἀσθενής ἀποφατική) (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. ii. c. 6, § 27, 28.)

No mere acquiescence, but a conviction which cannot be put aside, forcing its way into the soul against the will, as in the case of S. Paul. Such is belief, noble, grand, and strong. Unbelief, a "sickly," feeble "negative," poor and weak, a nothing upon which to lean in temptation, sorrow, and at the hour of death. A "sickly negative," a nothing, and yet like darkness, a deprivation of the hope, joy, and peace in believing. Unbelief represents mental imbecility. The very devils, being strong, believe and tremble. (S. Jam. ii. 19.)

11. Unbelief is degrading. The pagans of old traced their generation from "the old fabled oak and rock." (Hom. Od. xix. 163.) Socrates denies, in his strong, though unenlightened faith, that such was his origin. (Plato, Apol. 34 D.) "The unbelievers drag down all things to the earth, out of heaven, and the invisible; rudely grasping in their hands the rock and oak; (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. ii. c. 4, § 15) that is degrading things spiritual, to the level of things material.

*Epilogue.*—Follow S. Augustine's axiom, "Believe that you may know."

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## SERMON XXXII.

(Third Sunday after the Epiphany.)  
*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

ISAIAH LXVI. 2.

“To this man will I look, that trembleth at My word.”

*Introduction.*—“Let us diligently retain that which they delivered unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses, and ministers of the word (S. Luke i. 2), and let us meddle with nothing beyond what is fit ; for two certain losses pertain to those who labour under this disease : the one, that they toil in vain, seeking that which they are not able to find ; the other, that they provoke God to anger whilst they endeavour to overthrow the boundaries which are placed by Him. Wherefore let us tremble at His words, that He may continually look at us.” (S. Chrysostom. Hom. vii. In Joann.)

God’s Word represents His presence ; it is therefore to be read with a trembling of—

1. *Fear*—of His judgments, and of the after account of life. Partly flowing, like the fear of Felix, from the thought of the judgment to come (Acts xxiv. 25) : “he was terrified exceedingly,” but with a mere transient feeling, which he did his best to get rid of as soon as possible. The most wicked and hardened

are at times subject to a like fear. The true fear, which Holy Scripture engenders, arises from the deep and searching view which it takes of all things: of man, of the world, of the end and purpose of life, of the spiritual kingdom in its relation to ourselves, of the standard of faith and practice which it sets before us, so high and so holy that all must feel how greatly they fail and come short of it, of the Incarnation—"that great sacrament of Godliness" (1 Tim. iii. 16)—and of its wondrous power upon our race and its destiny. All are topics to excite holy fear, which begets (*a*) Humbleness of mind; (*b*) Carefulness of study; (*c*) Prayerful application.

- II. *Hope*—in the "great and precious promises" contained in the Gospel of His grace. This is a hope which should (*a*) Purify the life (1 S. John iii. 3); (*b*) Bring joy to the soul (Rom. v. 2), "For we ought to be fully assured, not only of the things which have been given, but also about those things which are about to be given" (S. Chrysost. in loco.); (*c*) Lighten sorrow (1 Thess. iv. 13), giving a patience of hope (id: i. 3).
- III. *Reverence*—for His precepts, which are the expressions of His mind. As being a picture, as far as we can understand it, of the mind of God. In His several commandments we trace the lines of His moral

portraiture. That which He loves, He bids us do ; that which He hates, He bids us avoid ; and so the several attributes of God are to be learned from the several expressions of His will which are contained in His word. The commands of God present to us such a picture of justice, mercy, wisdom, and love, that the mind is constrained to reverence them with an adoration which is not to be expressed by words only, but by a service to Him which is (a) Faithful and true, as far as possible, to His commandments ; (b) Thus man's reverence to God becomes (a) Practical, carried out in the life ; (b) Perpetual, doing all things to His glory ; (c) Perfect, inasmuch as the whole man ; body, soul and spirit unite to do Him honour.

- iv. *Delight*—in the insight which it gives of Himself, of the glorious future which is in store for His servants, and of the wonderful workings of His providence, all turning to good, whilst many seem to our limited vision to be at first sight harsh and contradictory. Delight in the triumphs of moral goodness, in the records of those who out of weakness were made strong. This delight of Holy Scripture should make us ever (a) Ready to read it ; (b) Disposed to meditate upon it ; (c) Apt to obey it.

*Indicia.*—I. “Trembleth,” moved and smitten in mind, the whole inner man excited by an internal commotion. This trembling (*châred*) was seen in Joseph’s brethren (Gen. xlii. 28), in the Israelites at Sinai (Ex. xix. 16), and at Gilgal (1 Sam. xiii. 7), in Abimelech, when David came to him (1 Sam. xxi. 2), in Saul, seeing the Philistines (1 Sam. xxviii. 5), in Elihu, when musing upon God’s works (Job xxxvii. 1). This trembling so affects the soul that it goes out of itself (S. Greg. Mag. moral in Job, lib. xxvii. c. 9.), it loses itself for the time in the contemplation of the thoughts suggested by God’s word.

II. We tremble in hope, “for many are our wrestlings without, and within, in order that, being nerved and comforted by the Scriptures, we might show forth patience, that living in patience, we might abide in hope.” (S. Chrysost. Hom. xxviii. in Rom.)

III. With trembling reverence we approach “Holy Scripture, which is a certain temple of the glory of God” (Origen in Matt. Tract xxv.), in which we worship.

*Epilogue.*—“Trembleth.” The Bible is not to be treated as a common book. See that Holy Scripture be a great awakener of the soul, arousing it from the lethargy of spiritual sloth to the fulness of life and of action.

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## SERMON XXXIII.

(Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## CONSCIENCE, GOD'S DEPUTY.

JOB XXVII. 6.

"My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

*Introduction.*—"Great is the conscience which spake these words, not to believe in which, I should esteem to be a large (*grande*) sin, for God had said of him that the man was true (Job i. 8), and free from falsehood." (Ven. Bede, A.D. 700, in loco.)

The (*lab*) heart here signifies the conscience, since the effects of the conscience are felt in the heart. The "table of their heart" (Jer. xvii. 1) signifies their conscience. "David's heart [or conscience] smote him" (1 Sam. xxiv. 5), as it did also after he had numbered the people (2 Sam. xxiv. 10). In many places in Holy Scripture heart and conscience are synonymous terms. The "wounded spirit" (Prov. xviii. 14) is an accusing conscience. Note Job's happy conscience answering him well. This deputy of God is one which—

1. *Observes*—all things, thoughts, words and deeds. Conscience observes with a very jealous, guarded, and careful eye; (*a*) Closely, scanning every thought, affection, and motive, and tracing them to their source and origin within the soul; (*b*) Unceasingly,

it never takes off its argus, hundred eyes ; there is no Mercury so to destroy its sight that "centum que oculos nox occupat una"; (*c*) Clearly, so that all things appear as they really are ; no mists either distort or darken its vision. To conscience, all things are naked and open.

- II. *Judges*—passes a true comment upon what it notes. The judgment of conscience is strictly (*a*) Impartial, weighed by no passion ; (*b*) Just, allowing of no mercy ; (*c*) Immediate, conscience records a present judgment.
- III. *Witnesses*—to the heart of man himself, as well as to God. "Their conscience also bearing witness" (Rom. ii. 15), showing, as S. Chrysostom says (in loco.), that God made man sufficient to choose virtue and to avoid evil. This witness delivers a testimony which (*a*) Condemns the sinner ; (*b*) Absolves the righteous ; (*c*) Comforts the over-sensitive ; (*d*) Torments the hardened.
- IV. *Records*—to treasure up against the time to come. This recording conscience is a never-dying worm, a never-quenched fire. At the last day it will deliver its final record before (*a*) God, in all His majesty, Jesus, seated on His throne of judgment ;

(*b*) Angels (S. Matt. xxv. 31); (*c*) Devils, and the lost spirits, who will mock as those they have betrayed; (*d*) Men (Dan. xii. 2), to their own everlasting glory, or to their own eternal shame.

*Indicia.*—I. “Conscience and God are two witnesses which cannot be deceived.” (S. Peter of Cluny. A.D. 1123. Epist. 1, lib. iv. 19.) They are mentioned together since the former is the minister and deputy of the latter. Conscience represents God, and carries on His divine work in the soul. Offending the one, the other is offended. The Master resents the offence against His servant, the servant the offence against the Master. Majesty is offended in the person of its ambassador. God is offended when conscience, His minister, is ill-treated. When a man therefore offends His own nature, he sins against God, since God, by conscience, dwells within him.

II. A good conscience makes a present heaven within the soul, a paradise into which the heart can retire and find its rest when sorely pressed by sorrow and trouble. “It is the resting-place of the soul” (Bruno Herbipol, A.D. 1033, in Ps. cxiv. 7), in which it finds its lasting peace. Psalm xxxiii. 6 teaches us how the heavens were made. “Truly these three, the Word, the Lord, the Breath [or Spirit] of His mouth create, form, and adorn the heaven of conscience.” (Peter Celensis, A.D. 1150, “De Disciplinâ.”) So then by the conscience, not God the

Holy Ghost alone, but with the Blessed Spirit, God the Father, and God the Son, the whole Trinity of grace and glory may be said to become the inhabitors of the soul. Sin, which defiles and hardens the conscience, turns this heaven into a hell, this Paradise of God into a barren wilderness of desolation.

III. Conscience is as inscrutable as God Himself: we cannot tell what it is, we know it by its action upon us. "It is an inscrutable abyss, and a most obscure night." (Peter Belesens, A.D. 1167. Ser. 56.) The soul bows before an unknown and secret power dwelling within her, from which it can never escape: a power which unites her in a wonderful way with the world unseen.

IV. Conscience records because "It is a natural book, and he who may read it diligently and gravely will have no doubtful experience of divine help." (S. Mar. Eremit. A.D. 360. De Lege Spirit, 186.) This book of "God's Deputy" teaches us the condition of our spiritual life.

*Epilogue.*—Seek to keep the conscience (*a*) Awake, unlike David (2 Sam. xii. 7); (*b*) Unhardened, (1 Tim. iv. 2.); (*c*) Pure (Heb. ix. 14; Acts xxiv. 16).

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## SERMON XXXIV.

(Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## THE NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

JOB XXVII. 20.

"A tempest stealeth him away in the night."

*Introduction.*—"What calls he (Job) night in this place save the hidden time of sudden departing? He designates truly by the name of 'tempest' the whirlwind of the judgment. The ignorance itself of our coming departure is called night. (S. Matt. xxiv. 43, 44; 1 Thess. v. 4, 5.) Hence to the proud, rich man (S. Luke xii. 20) it is said by the voice of God, 'This night.' In the night he is called upon to render up his soul, who, not foreseeing death, is carried away in darkness of heart." (S. Greg. Mag. Expos. Moral. in Job, lib. xviii. c. 12.)

This "darkness of heart," or soul, which the darkness of Egypt represented, is a darkness, or night, which is—

1. *Terrible*—paralizing all the higher faculties of the soul, awakening so great and so craven a fear. For it affects the feelings as nothing else, save an earthquake, can. In the prison, the dark chamber, is a terrible place of punishment; a too long confinement in it will produce, not only nervous fear, but insanity

itself. Sin is a perpetual and ever-increasing darkening of the soul; it leads up to this terrible darkness, when despair has seized the sinner's soul, when the cloud of black death falls upon it, and nothing is before it "but a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence all sin and doubt, tend in the end to bring fear and despair, rather than peace and hope, to the soul. It is terrible, for the shadow of fear which it casts is (a) Thick; (b) Huge; (c) Unknown. Pray for the light of faith, hope, and love; for that "light in the Lord" which leads to grace and blessing.

- II. *Dangerous*—as leading to a false security and calm. For danger cannot be seen in the dark, and when Satan has blinded the eyes of the soul it strays away unknowingly into many a sin, and it stumbles upon many a dark mountain of unbelief. Hence the danger is (a) Sudden and unexpected; (b) Unprotected; (c) Fatal. Seek to walk in that faith in which "Christ shall give you light."
- III. *Useless*—(Eph. v. 11) begetting idleness and despair. As the body cannot move without it can see by the bodily eye, so neither can the soul desire, conceive, aspire, and endeavour, unless it can see with the

spiritual eye. The soul must first conceive, and then seek to attain. The benighted soul is unfruitful in (*a*) Conception ; (*b*) Desire ; (*c*) Endeavour. Pray for such spiritual light, that the energy of the spiritual life may be manifested.

- iv. *Solitary*—separating the soul from all that is beautiful ; from contact with other kindred souls, by which it ought to be ministered unto, and to whom it ought to minister. Man was not made to live alone, for or by himself ; therefore did God institute social affections and the ties of human life, and therefore is heaven ever spoken of as being a state of mutual, and not of single joy, peace, worship and glory. Intense and perfect sympathy of nature will form one of the keenest delights of the home of the blessed. During the Egyptian darkness “they saw not one another” (Ex. x. 23) ; there was no going out to hold communion with one another, “For neither was anyone able either to speak or to hear, nor could anyone venture to take food, but they lay themselves down in quiet and hunger, not exercising any of the outward senses, for they were wholly overcome by the affliction.” (Philo. Vit. Mos. c. xxi.) So the darkness of sin makes the soul very solitary, shutting it off from all companionship of (*a*) True affection

and feeling, since no charity can dwell in a sinful soul ; (b) Improvement, by which the soul is helped onwards to holier and higher things ; assisted along its walk up the narrow path of eternal life ; (c) Strength, by which the holy increase, and nurture, good resolutions amongst them. Seek, then, for that fellowship and communion of Saints which forms the unity of such as are children of light.

*Indicia.*—I. “Thick darkness, (*γνόφος*), as being truly the unbelief and the ignorance of the many, which is opposed to the splendour of truth.” (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. v. c. 12.) Therefore is the darkness of sin and ignorance a lowly state, one of extreme humiliation ; and so the baptized in the early times were spoken of as being enlightened. Where we should say, “he has been baptized,” the primitive Christian would say, “he has been enlightened.” Jesus came into this world to turn men’s darkness into light, and that the glimmer of some minds might be changed into the more abundant light of the perfect day.

II. “Before the light, there was darkness : the symbol of sin uncreate and inconsistent ; so whilst the soul remains unregenerate and out of harmony, it is in darkness.” (S. Anastas. Sinaita. A.D. 561. Anago. Contemp. lib. i.) Progress in holiness, knowledge, in goodness of every kind, implies an

increase in light. In heaven will be the fulness of love and of knowledge, and the fulness of light. (Rev. xxii. 5.)

*Epilogue.*—Cling to the light of love and truth, to Jesus, who is the Light. Cast away darkness and its works, by holiness joined to Him, who is both Light and Grace.

### SERMON XXXV.

(Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Evening Lesson.*

### THE SPRING OF GRACE.

JOB XXVIII. 10.

“He cutteth out rivers among the rocks.”

*Introduction.*—“He endowed the hard hearts of the nation, and those bound with exceeding unbelief, with the abundance of His graces, like rivers and flowing streams. He granted to them a fruitful supply of doctrines (1 Cor. xii. 8-12)—these rivers of the grace of God, flowing forth. God saw how great and innumerable were the benefits of His compassion.” (S. Jerome in loco.)

The literal rendering is, “In the rocks He made to break forth (*bikkeang*) rivers.” The intensive (*Piel*) form of the verb being used. The similitude is that of a hard, unproductive rock; it is cloven, and a hidden fount flows from it, which swells in time into a mighty river. The water was

there, but it was unable to find an exit. Many a noble quality, and many a Christian grace, lies dormant in the soul; God, by His grace, acting through an inspiration, a conviction, an affliction, or some special dispensation of His providence, cleaves the soul, whence there issues the hitherto pent up springs of faith, love, holiness, gentleness, and the like, and they flow—

1. *Silently*—without rushing noise or tumult. Like the beginnings of a soft and gentle spring, which, void of sound, issues silently from the earth, rising, it may be, out from some barren and remote moorland rock, or hidden away under trees and brushwood. So, silently, is the spring of grace opened in the soul, that it may be hardly conscious of the blessed work which is going on within it. The spring, or fount, will in time become a scene of noisy, active, busy life, but its beginning was in silence and secrecy. So was the divine birth of our blessed Lord, so also was His saying, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation” (S. Luke xvii. 20), not with outward show, not with heralds sent out before it, and not with multitudes, so that all might know when the King would enter the royal city. (Euthymius, A. D. 1120.) Silently, to show that spring of grace is the personal gift of God to the soul; that it concerns alone

God and that soul. Avoid marked outward signs, tokens and manifestations of the religious life. The well of water springs up within, to life everlasting, being "a certain nourishment (*sagina*) of the Holy Ghost." (S. August. Tract xv. in Job.)

- II. *Evenly*—yet ever increasing, never less ; consistency in His gift, which denotes the steady flow of His grace ; not a flood to-day and a dryness to-morrow, but it wells out with a steady influence, to regulate the thoughts, to restrain the words, and to discipline and glorify the life. Aim at consistency and at progress, so that the path of life may shine more and more unto the perfect day.
- III. *Surely*—grace opens a spring that never dries up ; for the deepest, most hidden and steadiest springs never fail ; only those which are poor and superficial cease at times to flow, but where the spring is well within the soul, the cold of sorrow or the heat of temptation alike fail to influence the supply. In the deep rock of the soul, a fountain of grace is opened which is deep in (a) Feeling, partaking of the love of Jesus ; a fount of tenderness that can never be exhausted ; (b) Knowledge, taught by that same Divine Spirit which first moved upon the deep waters of the heart ; (c) Experience, for the riven soul can now hold free and

unhindered communion both with God and itself. Be not content with shadows ; seek for, and rest not till the deeper emotions of the soul are realized.

- iv. *Purely*—unmixed with the mud of worldly desires, and so the “spring of grace” sends out a pure and limpid stream, which is bright and clear, as fair flowing water, unsoiled by any contact or pollution with that which is worldly and impure. The silver stream flows purely from the dark caverns of the earth, as the “stream of grace” flows from the poor, weak, wayward heart of man. When grace touches the soul, a fount is opened in it which is pure in (*a*) Desire, not coveting this world's pleasure ; (*b*) Intention, holy in motive ; (*c*) Hope, which is fixed “where true joys only are to be found.”

*Indicia.*—I. “Spiritual grace is living water” (Radulph Flaviac, A.D. 960, in Levit. lib. 10), flowing from a living soul, when that soul is opened by the Living Spirit, enduring unto everlasting life.

II. When the rock of the soul is cleft, then is fulfilled the promise of Psalm xxxvi. 8, for “the spring of grace” shall flow into their souls “as a torrent, removing all the obstacles of earthly thought, and dissolving all the clay of earthly pleasure.” (Remig. Antissiod. A.D. 823, in Ps. xxv.) This stream or

spring being in itself cleansing, purifies the soul from its several defilements.

III. "The soul is the city of God, of which glorious things are spoken, because it was made in the image of God" (S. August. lib de Spirit et Anima): hence when it is opened by grace is fulfilled. (Ps. xlv. 4.) "What are the streams of this river? that inundation of the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord spake." (S. John vii. 38.) (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. xlv.)

*Epilogue.*—Seek to realize the promise of the Lord (S. John vii. 38), so that the soul, once solitary and desert, may again become the garden of the Lord.

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### SERMON XXXVI.

(Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

### THE SERVICE OF AFFECTION.

JOB XXIX. 16.

"I was a father to the poor."

*Introduction.*—"It is the first step of those who are beginning a good work, that he, who as yet does not know how to love his neighbour as himself, nevertheless now begins to dread the supernal judgments. Because, indeed, it is one thing to do a good work by precept, but another

thing also to do it from affection. The holy man, that he may insinuate to us the mind of his working, says, 'I was a father;' he witnesses that he himself had not been a patron, or a neighbour, or a hearer of the poor, but a 'father;' for verily he converted, by the great office of charity, the exercise of compassion into an affection of nature, that he might discern those to be sons by love, whom, as a father, he had presided over by protection." (S. Greg. Mag. Moral. in Job xix. 14.) Sonship expresses a high form of affection, and affection represents the highest form of service; for the service which flows from the affections is distinguished from other service as being—

- I. *Tender*—it springs from the depth of a loving heart, and it becomes therefore necessarily a service of sympathy. Job counts this fathership, this "service of the affections," to be very acceptable, since it shows that his knowledge and intention was to pass beyond the sphere of compassion into that of personal relationship. Just this service which Job rendered to the poor, God would have us render to Himself; a tender, filial obedience, which sympathises with, and enters into the purpose of, all His dealings with man. God is a Father to us, He deals with us in infinite tenderness, having sympathy with all our feelings and our weaknesses. Do we serve Him with

a loving service, one which forms part of our own nature? not going by the letter of commandments alone, but being guided by a heart which is at one with Him. This tender service is (a) Very cheerful, it is a delight to render it; (b) Anticipatory of need, foreseeing it; (c) Gentle and unpretending in its ministrations.

- II. *Minute*—it deems nothing to be a trifle, and, as such, to be unworthy of its fostering care; it reaches to the highest, it descends, without condescension, to the lowest things. In small things, by very trifling acts, God is as much served as by the greatest sacrifices of life. The true trial of love is the infinitude of small sacrifices which it demands; and after all, it is very small and petty actions which make up the sum of life. Such service is minute as being (a) Watchful of another's smallest wants; (b) Jealous of interference; (c) Particular as to the manner of rendering it.
- III. *Unselfish*—all thought of self is banished from its service; it takes no account of its own toil or loss. Such is the love and service which Jesus rendered to our race. Unselfish and so unsatisfied with its own efforts, feeling that it has not done, and never can do, enough. It is unselfish (a) in its intention, its sole object being to grant, and not to receive any benefit.

This is why God loves it so, for he often accepts our intention for our acts, and motive weights far more with Him than either words or deeds ; (*b*) In its actions, for it takes no reckoning of personal cost, of time, toil, or means ; it gives all these without one thought of the giver ; (*c*) Extent, it is unlimited in its service.

- IV. *Free*—it is not to be bought for money, it is not to be rendered for any secondary consideration whatsoever. Rejoicing in making life, with all its means, a willing offering of duty and love, which admits of no limit to its care and service, for its only aim is to make life with all its means an offering at the shrine of others which is (*a*) Willing in one sense, in another involuntary, since affection cannot help going out of itself to serve ; (*b*) Joyful, the real happiness of affection consists in the service of others ; such service forms its perpetual crown of rejoicing ; (*c*) Blessed in the effect which it has upon the server. Every thought and action of goodness has a reflexive influence upon the thinker and doer, which forms not the least part of its blessed results.

*Indicia*.—1. Moses loved God, and served Him with affection, hence God said to him (Deut. v. 30, 31.) “With the others resting delightedly in the tent of the flesh, the

servant of God was bidden not to stay: 'But as for thee, stand thou here by Me,' that by how much he was the more remote from the labours of the world, by so much the more vigilantly the favour of the divine quiet itself might exercise him in the divine followings." (S. Pet. Damiam. lib. iv. Epist. 5.)

II. "What signified those who stood up to bless upon mount Gerizim (Josh. viii. 38), save, without doubt, those who, not from fear of punishments, but from the hope of celestial rewards, and from the love of perfection, fly to the divine service, and who always bless God by the works of a holy conversation." (S. Pet. Dam. Opusc. xiii. c. 5, de perfect. Monach. Tom. iii. p. 126.) They who love God, and serve Him with affection, seek also to bless others.

III. It is affection that alone can govern the will, hence it is affection that makes the soul conform itself by the will, to the likeness of God, as it was made like to Him by nature, loving as it was loved. So loving, and so serving, it not only is able to breath (*respirare*) in the hope of pardon and mercy, but it also dares to aspire (*aspirare*) to the nuptials of the Word, and to enter into a sweet covenant of society with God. (S. August. Man. c. 18.)

*Epilogue.*—Seek to serve God from the heart with an acceptable loving service.

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## SERMON XXXVII.

(Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## MATURITY.

PROVERBS I. 3.

"Receive the instruction of wisdom."

*Introduction.*—"A splendid and figurative mode of speaking is the inspired phrase ('*lakahath*'), to the receiving ('*musah*') the discipline ('*hasechal*') of maturity." The Hebrew word for maturity (*Sachal*) is rightly explained, "to do a thing well;" to act prudently, strongly, and happily, so as to become prosperous and happy. These definitions express but a secondary meaning of the Hebrew (*sachal*), but they all flow from its primary force of 'growing to maturity.' Thus David was "more mature than all Saul's servants: he was mature (*sachel* 1 Sam. xviii. 30), and Israel wrought with mature hands, in laying his right hand upon Ephraim. (Gen. xlvi. 14, 17-20.) This illustrious metaphor is strengthened by the verb, "to the receiving" (*lakahath*), which rather means conceiving, than merely receiving. Truly paraphrased, the text would run, "To the conceiving in the recesses of the heart: as if cherishing heavenly seed—the discipline of maturity, through which thy prudence and happiness may be fulfilled." (Scultens in loco.)

This "discipline of maturity" is—

- I. *Firm*—in principle ; the ripe fruit of Christian experience. The wisdom here spoken of is, no mere synonym, common worldly prudence, but it signifies "maturity," a different notion altogether. A mature action, is one well planned, and well executed : a mature thought, is one well digested, the result of much learning, observation, or experience. A mature fruit is one thoroughly ripened, because the sun and rain and its early growing time have enabled it to produce its best. Such a fruit it is now beyond the power of passing winds to spoil : it has "ripened," and cannot be further injured. So they who have "received" the discipline or "instruction" of maturity or "wisdom : " they who, taught by the spirit of wisdom, are firm in the faith, "quitting themselves like men," and being strong, form their spiritual fruit, which is not to be blown off by every wind of doctrine, for it is firm in (a) Substance ; (b) Attachment ; (c) Development.
- II. *Prudent*—in action ; not hasty and inconsiderate. All undue haste, in thought, in the forming and expressing of opinion : in action, not waiting for emotion to cool down : is a sign of want of maturity or wisdom, which teaches us to keep our actions under due control, so as not to act upon mere impulse. It was

because our Blessed Lord was so "matured," so full of the instruction of wisdom, that He was so prudent in word and action in dealing with men. The fruit matures in a season which is (a) Suited to it; (b) Ordained for it; (c) Expected by experience.

- III. *Wise*—in thought : having a matured, well-grounded faith. With the faith well established and "matured" within the soul, like wine, which ripens and matures when kept in the cask, so thoughts, desires, and experiences mellow and tone down : by slow degrees all excesses and crudities disappear. The spiritual nature ripens like the fruit upon the sunny wall, which becomes in due time, and after due care, softened, not remaining in its former hard and unripe state, beautified by its colour and bloom, as sober Christian grace produces the ripe fruit of its maturer years : full flavoured, for the Sun of Righteousness hath well matured the blessed promise of life's early spring. This wisdom of maturity is (a) Deep, springing from the well of a regenerate heart ; (b) Pure, unclouded by the mists and sophisms of passion and of sin ; (c) Practical, finding its true expression in deeds as well as in thoughts of holiness.

- IV. *Happy*—in result : bringing forth the fruits of righteous-

ness, which fruits are, by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God. Happy, because they are the result or instruction and of discipline : because they are the rewards of waiting, praying, earnest seeking, and of many victories over self. Happy, as bringing with them a large measure of happiness, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding." Happy, in not making shipwreck of either life or faith, in that true spiritual discipline of self which perfects holiness in the fear of God. A happiness springing from such a source as this, cannot but be (*a*) Well grounded ; (*b*) Lasting ; (*c*) Sufficient for the soul here, and an earnest of full and perfect bliss in the life to come.

*Indicia.*—I. Mere age does not bring with it "the instruction of wisdom," the discipline of maturity ; many live a long life, and die unripened after all, growing worse instead of better with the falling of the years. Not time, but conflict, trial, and victory, mature the germs of Christian grace. The poet sang, "Wisdom is not in the young, but in those matured" (Aristoph. Eccles. 890), but then his wisdom was the world-craft of the hoary head, and not the divine inspiration of the saint.

II. Without discipline of soul, life, will, and purpose,

without a lowly bowing of the soul to the Will of God, nothing will ripen within.

*Epilogue.*—Let it be sought, that divine grace may ripen and mature each gift of holiness, that each day may indicate a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus, who is man's true Wisdom.

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SERMON XXXVIII.

(Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.)  
*Evening Lesson.*

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THE BOOK OF THE SOUL.

PROV. III. 3.

“Write them upon the table of thine heart.”

*Introduction.*—“For as Moses chiselled out the stones and the tables, so do we our souls.” (S. Chrysost. Hom. vi. in ii. Ad. Cor.)

“Socrates—It seems to me that our soul is like a certain book. Memory coinciding with the sensations, and these, with the affection, seem almost to write their discourses in our souls. And when a scribe of this sort writes within us,” etc. (Plato. Philebus. 38. E. 39. A.)

We are in life writing “upon the table (or *pinax*) of the heart,” so that one day the soul will be its own witness to itself. This writing is—

- I. *Continuous*—The book of the soul is ever open, never once shut, even for a single moment. Page after page is turned over day after day. Each day I am writing a portion of my eternal history; writing it without a pause from my first conscious existence to my death. I am ever preparing, in time, this chronicle for eternity. Continuous as following the order of (a) Life; (b) Thought; (c) Experience.
  
- II. *Lengthy*—This book will contain the whole history of my life, written fully and minutely; no mere sketch, but a detailed life and record from the cradle to the grave. No gaps are to be found in the soul's history of its life; it is full and complete, yet nothing could be spared if the record is to be circumstantial. Lengthy, for thought (a) Travels very fast; (b) Overlaps itself; (c) Embraces all time in relation to the soul.
  
- III. *True*—it is out of our power to falsify it by so much as a single word; it is a true transcript of thought, word and deed, as to things thought of, which were the most (a) Trifling, hardly, as we should say, worthy of a passing thought; (b) Secret, never intended to be divulged to anyone; (c) Personal, relating to the inner experiences of the soul. They

are related without any diminution, exaggeration, or alteration of any kind.

iv. *Involuntary*—we cannot help writing; we, as well as God, keep our own record, either for or against ourselves. Often would we gladly withhold our record if we could. Many thoughts, words and deeds we would gladly let pass away for ever, but the soul records them in spite of our (*a*) Will to forget; (*b*) Forgetfulness; (*c*) Hope, that the record may not be truly made.

v. *Indelible*—it can never be blotted or effaced till after the judgment. The emotions of to-day are forgotten to-morrow; the sins of this day will not be remembered, say a year hence; but the chronicle of to-day abides, written upon the soul. Tears cannot blot it out, pardon cannot efface it. This record of the soul of itself is indelible, as escaping alike (*a*) Decay, time has no power to obliterate it. The entry is as fresh to-day as it was years ago; (*b*) Accident cannot touch it; it is removed from all the contingencies of life; (*c*) Violence is useless here. The recording soul bears its record with it beyond the grave.

*Indicia.*—1. Upon the table of the body sin ever leaves its trace: and hence the body becomes its own witness to

the nature of the soul within. The expression of the countenance, the light of the eye, tells alike of a soul at rest or disquieted : of a thoughtful, or of an unthoughtful mind : of a hard, not a loving nature within. This outward record soon passes away, for the body turns to dust, and even before death age, and decay, obliterate many of the traces of the indwelling man, but the soul or heart is immortal, and what is written on it remains there as an eternal testimony for holiness or for sin for everlasting rejoicing, or for everlasting shame. Now all forms of truth, goodness, and beauty, are, in a certain sense, immortal, and capable of reproduction, therefore all thought, word, or deed, which is Christlike and noble, is not "impressed upon small leaves or inscription slabs, the lifeless upon the lifeless, but upon the immortal nature, the incorruptible, upon the deathless understanding." (Philo. p. 675. Colog.)

II. Not only is there a writing upon the table of the heart, by which it becomes its own eternal witness, but there is also a writing "upon the mind" (*nous*), (S. Irenæus), gravating thereon thoughts, words, lessons, circumstances, which no time, sorrow, change, or repentance can ever efface. This fact should make us careful of receiving impressions of anything that is unholy. The chance word, or thought, may cling to the memory for ever, and so alter the whole course of a life.

III. There is such a process also as “making wide the breath or table of the mind” (S. Chrysost. Hom. in Gen.), by which a larger number of records may be inscribed upon it, an increasing of the voluntary record of the understanding.

*Epilogue.*—Seek then that the record of “The Book of the Soul” may be such as without shame may be openly read at the last great day : and that the interior book of the memory may be preserved from sin.

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SERMON XXXIX.

(Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.)  
*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

THE MORNING.

PROV. VIII. 17.

“Those that seek Me early shall find Me.”

*Introduction.*—“They surely watch in the morning for Wisdom, who by a renewed desire of the mind strain every nerve to reach unto the sight of Christ.” (S. Jerome in loco.) “Seek Me early” (*umshakarai*—the intensive conjugation, *Piel*, from the verb *shāhar*, he was black ; the blackness before daybreak), or in the blackness of early dawn, ere there be light enough to see Thee. Hence ardour in seeking.

Holy Scripture implies the existence of four mornings : of the natural day, of the day of life, of the day of grace, and lastly, of the day of glory. The morning of the soul can be applied alike to these four conditions of its life. Wisdom, in itself, or in the person of Jesus, should be sought for in the morning of the soul, for then it is—

1. *Fresh*—not tired and wearied with the heat and toil of the day. The first-fruits of each day belong to Wisdom. Each day is, as it were, a new and fresh beginning of life ; for whilst the memory and the impressions of the past day remain, they are severed from the weariness with which at the close of the former day they were associated : renewed and refreshed by sleep, and ready for fresh exercise and endeavour. The soul that is fresh is (*a*) Clear, the doubts and obscurities of the thousands of impressions of yesterday have all passed away. It can now clearly feel, and clearly think. Give, then, its first clear waking thoughts to Jesus ; (*b*) Strong, in its thoughts, conceptions, and imaginings. The very gate of heaven is opened to the soul in the morning ; (*c*) Active, for fresh endeavour.
- II. *Undistracted*—The soul can then give its whole attention to that one matter. The undivided soul is strong

and apt. As divisions weaken nations, corporations, and families, so distractions and divisions of the soul weaken it by multiplying its centres of thought, and so preventing concentration. The rays of the summer's sun, as they come to us, produce a certain amount of warmth; concentrate them by a lens, and their heat becomes intense. Seek to concentrate the soul upon holy things.

- III. *Sensitive*—The first impressions are those which are quickest made and longest retained. It is so with the impressions of childhood and youth, they exceed all others in (*a*) Vividness; (*b*) Intensity; (*c*) Duration. The earliest impressions are those which are retained to extremest age. Let not sin, or the world, or this present life, gain the most sensitive moments of the soul.
- IV. *Free*—to allow the better and higher faculties of the soul to exert their full sway, and to gravitate to their true origin. It is its own master, before the claims of duty, and the daily thoughts of life are forced upon it, and obtain their hold upon its attention, power, and affections, or inclinations. The soul must feel itself to be free, ere it can rise to any great or saving exercise. The poet, to sing a sublime and morning

song, must be free in spirit, like the lark is in her melody. The soul of the philosopher must be free alike from passion and prejudice, ere he can rise to any truly high speculation. The Christian heart must be free from sin before it is able to enter into the mysteries of divine grace. Well may the psalmist pray to be conformed by God's free (*nedivah*) Spirit (Ps. li. 12), by the free reasoning (*τὸν ἀντοκράτορον λογισμον*) of the Greek commentator; for a man can only be really made or established, by possessing a spirit which is truly free (2 Cor. iii. 17), or "voluntary"; free, as being weighed down by no (*a*) Habitual sin; (*b*) Delusion of the night of crime; (*c*) Sorrow; but rejoicing in the fresh light of a new day of rest, gladness and light.

*Indicia.*—1. Of the natural day the poet sings, "The Dawn distributes, verily, the third portion of work; the Dawn moves forward on the way; it promotes the work, that Dawn, which appearing, sends many men on their journey." (Hesiod. Op. et. Di. 578-80.) So then the morning of this world's day is the season at which this day's work and action begin, setting men well along on their path of daily duty, on the journey of this life, with its toils, cares, and duties to which God hath appointed them. To the faithful this dawn is a time of prayer, when they

“ must pray, that the Resurrection of the Lord may be commemorated by an early worship.” (S. Cyprian. De Orat. Dom. § 22.) A time, as being the day’s first-fruits, and one in which was laid the foundation of the Christian’s hope, and which, therefore, must be given to God.

II. The morning also signifies the dawn of the day of holiness after a night of sin. “ Behold, I am in the night, but in Thee have I hoped until nocturnal iniquity may pass away.” (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. cxlii.)

III. “ The morning is the end of this world, when we shall see that which in this world we believed. This night demands patience, the day gives joy.” (Id.)

*Epilogue.*—This morning, early seeking after God, implies such a desire for, dedication to, and devotion in, His service, as must needs find acceptance in His sight, and bring with it every blessing, both for time and for eternity.

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## SERMON XL.

(Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## THE HANDMAIDS OF WISDOM.

PROV. IX. 3.

"She hath sent forth her maidens."

*Introduction.*—In this sublime allegory, the Highest Wisdom, Jesus (1 Cor. i. 24), is represented as having built a house, when He received into the unity of His person that manhood which He had Himself created, and which He adorned with the seven-fold gifts of His Holy Spirit. In this house a great banquet of spiritual things is made. (S. Luke xiv. 16, 17.) Her maidens, not servants, she hath sent forth to invite souls to her spiritual feast (*nagnarotheyah*, her girls), for Wisdom, as a Queen, is allegorically represented as attended by a chorus of virgins, which, being girls, are persuasive, gentle, and pure. (S. Jerome.) Wisdom is personified in this passage by the figure of speech called *prosopopæia*, and the "she," Wisdom, must be referred to Jesus, the true Wisdom, who sends out to call souls to Himself, the maidens, the theological virtues of—

1. *Love*—to draw souls (Jer. xxxi. 3), by its attractive power. Love, like a magnet, draws other loving hearts to itself. The loving heart of Jesus, the

highest Wisdom, is this magnet, and He sends the spirit of love into our hearts, that by its presence there, He may draw them to Himself. (1 S. John iv. 19.) Unless the iron be magnetic it does not attract other pieces of iron to it. The factors are three-fold : firstly, the love which dwells in the heart of Jesus ; secondly, the sending into the soul the spirit of love, the handmaid of wisdom ; thirdly, this handmaid inducing the heart to become sensitive to His loving attraction, so that the soul may become knit together with Him in love. The attractive power of love is (a) Quick, the needle flies to the loadstone at once ; (b) Strong, surmounting many an obstacle ; moved away, the needle returns to its old position on the magnet ; (c) Lasting, until forcibly separated they remain attached to each other, just as the needle remains on the loadstone till pulled away.

11. *Hope*—to inspire souls to press onward to the higher life. She cometh to souls with her hands full of promises, bearing visions and earnest of her future gifts ; full of life and life-giving, for “hopes dwell with the living, but the hopeless are the dying.” (Theocrit. Idy. iv. 42.) There is no hope in the grave. Jesus comes to living souls that He may bestow upon them a better and a fuller life. (S. John

x. 10.) Before hope, grace, truth and life came into the world by Jesus Christ; it was a lament of a great, but mournful mind, who looked at things as they really were, that "Faith, the great goddess, had departed, and Temperance gone away from men, and the Graces, O friend! had left the earth, and that the other gods had gone Olympianwards, having forsaken us, but that Hope was the only propitious goddess who was still present amongst men; therefore, so long as anyone lives and sees the light of the sun, let him wait on hope." (Theog. 1130-40.) Hope is specially the handmaid of Jesus, because to Hope (a) All things are possible. (Linus.) It was hope that made S. Paul say (Phil. iv. 13); (b) There is no death (1 Pet. i. 3); "living," as being immortal; (c) There is no limit; hence the poet's command, "Hope for all things." (Heb. vi. 11.)

- III. *Faith*—to give souls confidence in Him, as our Guide. To lead us unto the true Wisdom through this world's mazy path of doubt, and sorrow, and sin. We are lost and wandering. Faith takes us gently and lovingly by the hand, and leads us along "the highway of holiness" to the city of our great King (a) Slowly, that we may note each portion of the road, and may not travel beyond our strength; (b) Surely,

never taking us out of the way; (c) Finally, till the journey be ended.

- iv. *Humility*—to make souls feel their need of this Wisdom By showing them their imperfections and shortcomings, and bringing home to them a sense of their need of a Saviour's (a) Help (Heb. iv. 16); (b) Guiding (S. John xiv. 6); (c) Teaching (S. John v. 40), by My life-giving words of teaching. Humility was the true earthly handmaid of Him who said (S. Matt. xi. 29), "lowly," thoroughly humbled in spirit.

*Indicia.*—I. These handmaidens of Jesus own a mutual relationship. (Heb. xi. 1.) Heavenly Wisdom (Beatrice) told the poet (Dantê) to question S. Peter, "for he loves, hopes, and believes well." Three of the handmaids uniting in him. The poet adds—

" Le profonde cose  
Che l'esser loro v' è in sola credenza  
Sovra la qual si fonda l' alta spene."

"The deep things (of Paradise) have their being in belief alone, on which is founded lofty hope." (Div. Com. Para. cxxiv.) Faith and Hope go hand in hand; they mutually minister to the King.

II. The reception of Jesus, who is unto us (1 Cor. i. 30), implies the cultivation of the several graces of His spirit.

The handmaids must dwell in the soul in which the Master finds a place.

*Epilogue.*—These four Christian graces, these “maidens” of Wisdom, must represent the disposition of heart of those with whom Jesus loves to dwell, and to enrich by His grace. They must be welcomed to the soul with joy, honoured there, and be obeyed. They are the heralds of a mightier and of a more august presence than themselves, even of their great Lord and King.

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SERMON XLI.

(Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Evening Lesson.*

THE SIGHT OF JESUS.

PROV. XI. 30.

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.”

*Introduction.*—“The reward of the righteous is the sight of Christ, for He Himself is the Wisdom of whom it is said, ‘She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her’ (Prov. iii. 18), and in the Apocalypse, ‘To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.’ (Rev. ii. 7.) And the righteous may expect this fruit now, for as it has been said a long time before, ‘They flourish as a green leaf.’” (Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12.) (S. Jerome in loco.)

The (*peri*) fruit, is taken to be a reward ; the spiritual life which the spiritual vision of Jesus confers upon holy souls. In the case of S. Paul we have an example of what this "tree of life," this "visio Christi" did for one of ourselves, it—

- I. *Changes*—the whole current and aspect of life ; it brings a personal Saviour home to the soul, both as revealing, and as pardoning sin ; it opens a new world to the spiritual sight, and with this spiritual sight of Him, comes the love to Him, a love which purifies the soul, as making it long to become like Him. The spiritual sight of Jesus, in all His glory, purity, and power, brings the knowledge of indwelling sin home to the conscience, since it teaches us not only in part what He is, but also what we ourselves are. We cannot be after this sight, the same as we were before it. We must be either better or worse ; more softened or more hardened in heart ; nearer heaven or nearer hell. The sight of Jesus, the taking hold of this "Tree of Life," changes man's (1) Views of life, deepening and extending them ; (2) Aims and desires, placing a new goal before him ; (3) Actions, to conform them more and more to Jesus.
- II. *Humbles*—the sight of Him reminds us what He has done for us, and how unworthy we are of so much

love. The knowledge of sin ever humbles the soul, and makes it feel its manifold imperfections. The "Tree of Life" places an ideal before the mind, to which, when we compare ourselves, we note our (a) Smallness, not having attained to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13); (b) Deformity, we are so unlike Him; (c) Baseness of nature. The fruit which we produce is so different to that of the Tree of Life.

- III. *Strengthens*—us to endure, as it did Moses (Heb. xi. 27), and to struggle against sin, toil, disappointment and sorrow. For holiness begets a new life, and with the new life comes a new strength, so that S. Paul could say (Phil. iv. 13), for He both gives the power to do, and also Himself works in us. The entire inner man becomes stronger by the vision, for it increases the power of the eye of faith, enabling it to see further and clearer into the mysteries of grace, and into the coming glories of that place whither Jesus hath gone before us, to prepare for us. It strengthens the hope, and so makes present toil and discipline to seem light. It strengthens the love, by which the soul not only endures, "as seeing Him who is invisible," but it becomes so drawn to Him that its life is hid with

Christ in God. It gives greater strength (*a*) To suffer for the present ; (*b*) To strive for the mastery against sin ; (*c*) To stretch forward unto those things which are before.

- iv. *Inspires*—us with a new and better life, with a clearer aim, and with higher and nobler principles of action. The rule of life, or the rule of holiness, passes into an inspiration ; it transcends the letter ; it is a spirit which giveth life. This fount of holiness, the sight of this glorified “Tree of Life,” converts the rule of life into an inspiration, which, whilst it preserves the letter, passes into a spirit, which gives a greater liberty, and yet engenders a stricter obedience to the law of the love of God. This inspiration glorifies the soul by its gifts of (*a*) Divine knowledge ; (*b*) Divine thoughts ; and (*c*) Divine desire. “Yet not I live, but Christ liveth in me.”

*Indicia*.—i. “Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God, is Himself the ‘Tree of Life’ (Prov. iii. 18), with whom we ought to be planted together ; and by a certain new and amiable gift of God, His death made Him a ‘Tree of Life’ to us.” (Origen. Ad. Rom. lib. v. c. 5.) Walking under the shadow of His cross, He becomes our “Tree of Life,” the reward or fruit of our service to Him.

II. "In the world also the Word flourished, and bore fruit, becoming flesh : and those tasting of His goodness He quickened ; neither without the Word did He come to us in relation to knowledge, for our Life hung upon our faith." (Clem. Alex Strom. v. 10.) Our sight is then of Jesus crucified. The fruit of holiness is therefore crucifixion of self. (Gal. ii. 20.)

III. Not for man as yet in Paradise, but for man as walking still amidst death and sin, is the sight of the "Tree of Life" vouchsafed, as a provision of love and mercy to help him on his way.

*Epilogue.*—Seek to plant this "Tree of Life" as a consecrating presence in the midst of this present life and probation, so as now not only to eat of its Eucharistic fruit, but also to sit under its shadow with great delight.

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## SERMON XLII.

(Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

## A GOOD HEART.

PROV. XV. 15.

"He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast."

*Introduction.*—The expression is to be understood generally of a heart that is free from sorrow : and, like many of the maxims in Solomon's writings, it is to be applied to the common events of life. By goodness of heart, understand here, not carnal goodness, but moral, so that "a good heart" is the same as a pure or right heart (Ps. vii. 10 ; xxiv. 4), which is of great force in wisdom and virtue. Solomon teaches us to merrily enjoy, contented with our lot, the things granted to us by God, nothing tormenting us." (Synopsis Corticorum in loco.) Merry (*a.s. myrig*) signifies light-hearted, unweighed down by over-much care : a heart fulfilling (S. Matt. vi. 34) : a heart freed from the burden of sin. The Hebrew word (*tob*) "good" is translated "merry" here, as of the Philistines rejoicing over Samson at Gaza (Judg. xvi. 25) ; of Nabal at his feast (1 Sam. xxv. 36) ; of Jezebel's advice to Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 7).

The word also means pious, honest, happy, beautiful, etc., therefore the heart that has a continual enjoyment in life is one that is—

I. *Pure*—morally and spiritually cleansed by divine grace.

Short as life is, it would be a great blessing were each day of it a "continual" and perpetually-recurring "feast" or banquet, a symposium of the soul in which it was being (1) Fed on the best of aliments; (2) Strengthened to do and to bear all things; (3) Gladdened, so that each succeeding day becomes a fresh season of rejoicing. "A continual feast" upon viands which are holy and full of joy: so that each day might be prophetic of the great Eucharistical Feast of which the prophet speaks. (Isaiah xxv. 6.) Were this the case, how different would life be from what it is: what a fitting and glorious preparation would it be for the life to come. To gain this end the heart must be pure (S. Matt. v. 8), "As a mirror, if pure [or clear], receives the images, so the pure soul receives the face of God, and the knowledge of the Scriptures." (Theophy. in loco.) And many other beautiful things are reflected there, (1) Clearly, no blurred outline; (2) Brightly, no dim vision; (3) Exactly, no distortion; (4) Continually, ever receiving the reflection, or image, so ever feasting.

II. *Bold*—aiming high, and devoid of all craven fear and doubt. So as to anticipate no troubles, etc., before

they come: and when they do come, to be able to look them boldly in the face, and not to be unduly cast down by them. The ground of this boldness must be that holiness which assures the soul in its time of need that it can overcome all its enemies, "because," (as S. Jerome says) "it loves Him alone whom unwillingly it can in no wise lose." The merry or good heart, is bold in (a) Holding its own, like SS. Paul and Barnabas at Antioch (Acts xiii. 46); (b) Attacking error and wrong (2 Cor. vii. 4); (c) Under suffering of all kinds (Acts xvi. 25.)

- III. *Secure*—as resting upon a good foundation, having let down its anchor of hope within the veil. (Heb. vi. 19.) Security gives boldness. Secure of eternal life, we gain boldness to meet death; secure of the loving pardon of Jesus, we gain boldness to confess our sins; secure in our faith we are bold in defending the traditions of the Church. This security enables us to rejoice in tribulations, for we are confident. (2 Cor. iv. 17.) This good heart has a security which is (a) Sufficient for its needs; (b) Lasting, having become a part of its being; (c) Untroubled by any perplexities, for it is cast upon God.
- IV. *Happy*—in contentment with God's gifts, be they small or great; with the power also of extracting even from

His chastisements some elements of sweetness and of joy. Happy in its due and proper use of all God's "creatures;" thankful for what it hath, unrepining for that which it hath not. This "merry heart" feasts all things, extracting good out of seeming evil; such an one realizes (Rom. viii. 28). This happiness is (a) True, founded upon a firm foundation; (b) Blessed, as uniting this life with the life to come; (c) Communicative, it, like heat, radiates to all within its reach.

*Indicia.*—I. This good, or "merry heart," was the "good cheer," or confidence (θάρασσα), with which the Lord blessed the healed and forgiven paralytic (S. Matt. ix. 2); comforted the disciples in the midnight storm at sea (S. Matt. xiv. 27); "Casting out fear, and furnishing confidence." (S. Chrysost. in loco.) In all these cases a certain sense of security and boldness is invited, founded upon the promise of victory over trials. (S. John xvi. 33.) So the weak and effeminate body, would in the old time, inspire the enemy with a good heart, with the hope of, and confidence in, victory. (Plato Ethyd. 275. c.)

II. S. Paul, during the shipwreck, invites his fellow-voyagers to be of "good cheer," of good heart (εὐθύμος), happy and contented (Acts xxvii. 23, 25), "wishing to bring over," to his own cheerful view of things, as ordered by God,

“those sailing with him, urging them.” (S. Chrysost. in loco.) A lovely fragment of song the poet (Æschylus) places in the mouth of Apollo, singing over Thetis, as she says, on her wedding day, “Then all-inclusively he blessed my lot, in strains that cheered me.” (Plato *Repub.* 383. B.)

*Epilogue.*—A good heart, that both blesses this life, and rejoices in the hope of another, should be gained, by God’s help, at the cost of parting from any one sin, or error, which burdens the soul, and so eats out its joy.

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### SERMON XLIII.

(Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

### THE SLOTHFUL.

PROV. xv. 19.

“The way of the slothful man is an hedge of thorns.”

*Introduction.*—“He [Solomon] calls them slothful whom it irketh to work righteousness; who, although they desire ‘the way of the Lord,’ as the thorns of the hedges prick those who try to force a way through them, so do the suspicions of their own fears, which are opposed to them, prick them.” (S. Jerome in loco.)

The LXX. read, “of the idle” (*ἀεργῶν*), and the Hebrew (*gnatsef*) expresses simply the notion of sloth.

“This way is hard and rough to him walking along it, he is hindered and entangled, as by thorns and thickets; his progress seems as difficult and as troublesome to him as if on all sides there was a hedge with brambles. (Prov. xxvi. 13.) He places before himself everywhere danger and difficulty, even where all things are easy. When the dull and slothful are incited to walk in the way of the commands of God, they do so most lamely.” (Sinop. Critico. in loco.)

The New Testament word for slothful (*ὀκρως*) implies a dull, heavy nature, wanting in elasticity and energy; one beset by laziness, fear, and grievances. Such dull, heavy, unimpressible, sluggish and slothful souls walk along the two-fold way of life and of God—

1. *Slowly*—stopped and checked by every slight hindrance.

Even with the best intentions, but slow progress can be made in forcing a passage through briars and underwood. It demands strength, patience, and determination. To the slothful the whole course of life is one continued passage through “an hedge of thorns,” through small difficulties, and small obstacles, which might be pushed aside and trampled down with energy and will. The real translation of the passage is, “as if a hedge of thorns” (*kadek*, from *kadak*, he pricked), through which an active spirit will make its way. This spiritless and slow course of

inaction consumes (1) Time in which much progress might be made ; (2) Pleasure and heartiness in the work ; (3) Strength and power to fulfil it. (Eccls. ix. 10.)

- II. *Feebly*—putting forth no fire or energy into what they do. Feebleness is almost worse than slowness, for it hinders any real and solid progress. The feeble walkers along the highway of sloth are (1) Half-thinkers, never having any clear and definite thought upon any one subject ; (2) Half-doers, never doing anything thorough and well. Their feet tread so lightly the path of life, that they leave no impress in which others can step, who come after them ; (3) Half-feelers, with affections as languid as their thoughts.
- III. *Fearfully*—haunted by the phantoms of their craven brain, with no pleasure, joy, or hope in anything which they may do ; no fulfilment of (Coloss. iii. 23.) The exhilaration of energy and activity is all unknown to them, and the enthusiasm of life and work which hastens and lightens toil and discipline, has never entered into their experience. They delight not in trials either of strength or of endurance. The lion of fear lies ever in their path, of fear which is (a) Unfounded, the product of a lazy nature and a corrupt heart ; (b) Contemptible, as bringing its possessor to shame both for time and also for

eternity ; (c) Destructive of all success. Once allow "I cannot," and failure must inevitably follow. It imagines difficulties.

- iv. *Painfully*—as being unused to bear pain, discipline, or fatigue ; as being wont to regard all duty in the light of a heavy burden ; all needful progress as involving more than its worth of self-sacrifice. Painfully, as magnifying small efforts into great ones, and making undue lamentation over failure. Such walk along the path of life as if they had stones in their shoes. Such suffer a pain of (a) Body, because the soul does not quicken it in its work ; (b) Soul, from a morbid and undue self-consciousness ; (c) Defeat, for the slothful labour, if not wholly in vain, is at best to little purpose.

*Indicia.*—I. The slothful gain no answer to prayer. How can one expect help from God who takes no trouble about his own salvation ? "The efforts which are demanded of man must precede, and then those which flow from the divine help will follow." (S. Isod. Epist. iv. 13.)

II. "The slothful are open to the attacks of Satan, who stripped man of goodness to clothe him with sin. That, he could not have done by himself, unless he had been greatly strengthened by the sloth of those whom he deceived." (S. Isod. Epist. iv. 15.) The slothful are often the prey of Satan.

III. The slothful are ever careless, inattentive, unthoughtful, and lazy, for sloth is the parent "of difficulty of motion" (S. Greg. Naz. Iamb. 199. c.), producing a disinclination towards any healthful action, be it of mind or of body; reckless alike of the work to be done in this world, and of the all-important preparation for life to come.

IV. The soul is a vast treasury, containing things bad and good: virtues and vices, graces and evils. "Shall we," asks the guest in the dialogue, "place carelessness and sloth, and effeminacy, as pertaining to the virtue of the soul?" How can we answer Clinias? (Plato. Laws x. 900. E.) Sloth is a vice, an evil, a plague-spot on the soul, hindering and corrupting.

V. God ordained that this world should be a kind of hive, in which men, like bees, should work, extracting honey out of life, thought, providence, out of everything capable of yielding increase. Therefore famine, whether of mind or body, is ever the companion of the slothful, the unworking man. The drone, living upon others' labours, is scorned alike by God and man. (Hesiod. Works. and Days. 302-4.)

*Epilogue.*—All God's accepted servants have been ardent, ready, and joyful workers, regarding nothing as a hardship or a labour which tends to supply in any degree their lack of service. Seek to imitate them.

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## SERMON XLIV.

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## GOD'S LAST WORK.

GEN. I. 26.

"And God said, Let us make man."

*Introduction.*—"Why is man the last work (*ἄσφατον ἔργον*) in the creation of the world? That he might want nothing of the things needful for life, and for living well; and for the teaching of those following him. God, having purposed the beginning and the end of created things to fit together as necessary and most beloved, made heaven the beginning, and man the end. The one, the most perfect of incorruptible things, amongst those which are sensible; the other, being a small heaven, having imaged in himself many starlike natures, that the other animals should wonder at him, and worship him as a ruler and a lord." (Philo. De. Op. Mun. § 25-29.)

The Hebrew word for man (*adam*) signifies red or ruddy, implying that the first man had an open ruddy countenance, expressive of happiness, holiness, and health. Our race was created by God as His "last work" that man might become—

1. *An Inheritor*—of a beautiful world in which to live, as

if invited by God to a great feast in this life, of both body and soul. We are too much apt to forget the infinite mercies which we inherit at our birth: the preparation of a home; the tender care of others to nurture us afterwards; the knowledge which is to be gained; the varied and suitable nourishment which hath been provided, both for the body and the soul, of a new nature and a new birth of the Spirit, and of "great and precious promises;" of all the former preparation of the earth through past ages; of all the recorded learning, wisdom and experience that has preceded us. The later in time men are born, the greater is the inheritance to which they succeed. How are we dealing with this, our present inheritance? Are we using it (*a*) To God's glory; (*b*) For our own lasting good; (*c*) For the relief of man's estate? Are we so living as to prove ourselves to be worthy of a greater trust, "true riches," things spiritual, and divine gifts? (S. Cyril Alex. on S. Luke xvi. 11.)

- II. *A Teacher*—of those coming after him, in knowledge both human and divine, carrying onward the torch of light. Every life is an example for good or for evil. Man must teach: the kind of teaching and the manner of it depends upon himself. No one is devoid of all influence in the world. What is my life

teaching? Is it (*a*) Christian godliness? (*b*) Is it industry? (*c*) Is it contentment, resignation, or the like? Men are ever teachers, both in word and work: teachers by necessity, and it behoves them to look well to the nature of their teaching, for which an account must be given.

- III. *A Mediator*—between heaven and earth, between a lower world and the highest heaven, having a body of earth, and a spirit of heaven; as standing between two worlds, two kingdoms, one of light, the other of darkness; passing in prayer and meditation onwards and upwards from things of time and sense to communion with the Father and the Son (1 S. John i. 3), or passing downwards to the region of sorrow and remorse here, and to “shame and everlasting contempt” hereafter. Man is a mediator; each act of love and kindness which he performs is an exercise of his mediatorial office, connecting that “creation which groans and travails in pain” with the love and mercy which form a portion of those “pleasures which are at God’s right hand.” Man’s mediatorial work is (*a*) Deputed to him by God, from whom alone he receives the gift; (*b*) Blessed, as undoing somewhat the ruin of the fall; (*c*) Rewarded by the approval of conscience, and, in a higher degree, by

the sense which it brings of God's favour following the humble fulfilment of this trust.

- iv. *A King*—ruling all things, to God's glory and to His creatures' use, and his own benefit. Man's kingdom is large, it embraces the empires of (*a*) Mind, mind acting upon mind, the greater mind inspiring other and weaker minds to render it humble and involuntary homage; (*b*) Life, the power of life and death over the inferior creatures is in his hand; nay, the life often even of his fellow-man; (*c*) Matter, discovering the hidden forces of the universe: electricity, gravitation, and the like, and compelling them to do his bidding, and to minister to his wants. In the literal, as well as in the spiritual sense, man is made a "king unto God." (Rev. i. 6; v. 10.)

*Indicia.*—I. Looking at man's body only as dust to be turned to dust, as the subject of pain, need, decay and death, the definition holds good. "Man is suffering [or impassioned] earth" (*γῆ πασχουσα*) (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. v. c. 10), but man has a soul which is not "earth," and this definition is therefore imperfect, and subject to limitation; it is true of the body, but not of the soul.

II. "The sacred Scriptures teach that man was the last work (*opus ultimum*) of God, and so he was led into this world

as if into a house, already prepared and furnished. For his sake were all things made. Poets also confess this. Now, the world being perfected, and all the animals formed, Ovid adds, 'An animal more holy than these, and capable of a higher mind, as yet was wanting, and Man was born that he might rule over the rest.'" (Lanctant. Institut. lib. ii.) Man's heirship and his kingly nature are plainly brought out by this Father.

III. "Men excel all the other animals in honour and reason: and man is called to bear rule by reason and wisdom over all that are in the earth." (Origen Hom. ii. in Gen.) Such is his high station as ordained by God.

IV. "Man," cries S. Proclus (Orat. ii. in Incar. Dom.), "is the tongue of creation," the race alone who uses articulate speech, and can communicate the imperishable thoughts of his immortal soul.

V. "Man, when freed from passion, is the most free, the most fit to rule, and the most kingly of the kings themselves." (S. Isodor. Ep. iii. 133.)

*Epilogue.*—As by creation, man is God's last and most glorious work: and as by redemption, he can claim a sonship with the Almighty: how mindful ought he to be, so to use his high estate, that it may suffer no diminution, and no degradation, in passing through his hands.

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## SERMON XLV.

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

*Morning Lesson.*

## MOTHER EARTH.

GEN. I. 2.

"The earth was without form, and void."

*Introduction.*—"Wherefore did He [God] make the heaven beaming and exactly made up, but the earth did He display unformed? Because she is both our nurse and mother, (*τροφος και μητηρ*) and we were made out of her, and nourished by her, and she is our country, and our common sepulchre, and there is a return to her; and by means of her, we enjoy a thousand blessings. Lest therefore, on account of the necessity of use, the race of men should honour her more than is meet, He shews you that formerly she was without form and unshapen, lest you should impute the blessings of earth to herself, rather than to Him, who out of non-being, created her to be." (S. Chrysost. Hom. in loco.)

The original words for "without form" and void (*tohu* and *bohu*), really signify wasteness and voidness. Our relationship with earth is full of mystery and of wonder. The connection is very close, and it teaches man his—

1. *Imperfection*—he is an imperfect child of a material world; imperfect as being subject to time and space.  
Man is born (a) Of the world, of those who belong

to the world ; (*b*) Into the world, to live for a short time upon its surface ; (*c*) To return to the material of the world again. The world in itself, viewed as God's handiwork, is perfect ; but man's relationship with the world is imperfect, because of sin against the laws of God, moral, physical, and spiritual. Pain, is an imperfection ; sorrow, is an imperfection ; and death is the greatest imperfection of all. In holy spirits dwell absolute perfection, but in so far as man is material, he is imperfect. All that man can do is to consecrate the material earth of his body, for the time being, by using it for high and holy purposes. A life of holiness atones for much imperfection whilst it lasts. " Be ye therefore perfect." (S. Matt. v. 48.)

- II. *Mortality*—he returns to earth again. (Gen. iii. 19.) As the faithful mother teaches her children simple, useful, and profitable lessons, so does " Mother Earth," if we will hearken to her instructions. " You are earth," she says, " you will return to dust : but out of this dust a new life will spring : other lives form and flow from yours : mortal in yourself, your posterity live after you : live worthy of an immortal race." Let mortality be swallowed up in the immortality of (*a*) Holy thoughts ; (*b*) Holy words ; (*c*) Holy deeds.

- III. *Change*—earth is ever changing, and all who live upon its surface are changing too. Thus should man learn to look upon change as a necessary condition of life, and so by divine grace to prepare for all change, so that it may not take him unawares. “Be ye also ready.” (S. Matt. xxiv. 44.) Change in itself is by no means an unmixed evil: it often is an eternal and infinite good. God Himself is an energy of action, and all His works are ever undergoing some change, to prepare them for another and a final end. Change is an essential condition of this present world, in which “all things are becoming, and nothing is.” Hence change is spoken of, as not only becoming pleasant, but as being accommodated to nature, hence it is said, “Change is sweet in all things.” (Aristot. Rhet. i. xi. 20.) Change, therefore, is consonant with man’s (a) Life, ever changing according to its different ages; (b) Dwelling-place, the earth by which he is surrounded; (c) Destiny, to be changed wholly hereafter, when, after bearing the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.
- IV. *Progress*—going on from better to better: “from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord,” (2 Cor. iii. 18) “by His glory unto our own glory” (Theod. in loco.), till a

limit is reached, and a new and a higher order of things is gained for ever. Our "Mother Earth" teaches man a lesson ; from "wasteness and voidness," it progressed, till it became, by God's appointment, the beautiful world we see it to be now. See, then, that your progress in holiness, wisdom, and knowledge be : (a) True and real, so that you may become better to-day than you were the day before ; (b) Continual, carried on without any halt and intermission ; (c) Holy, so as by it to become fitted for a dwelling with the holy hereafter.

*Indicia.*—I. Earth is the "long home" and last resting-place of the body : "Naked shall I return thither." (Job. i. 21.) "Where is 'thither?' Where all before me have gone; where all from the beginning ; 'thither,' into the earth, the mother of all ; into the earth, the house of all. For the earth is the house of all mortals. 'Thither,' where Adam, and all who have come after him, have gone. 'Thither,' where he has gone to whom it was said. (Gen. iii. 19.)" (Origen Job, lib. i.)

II. A certain connection unites man with the earth, and both with God's judgments. (Ezek. xiv. 13.) As the punishment of a mother would be felt in the banishment of her sons, "so our mother earth is afflicted when God cuts off man and beast from it." (Origen in Ezek. Hom. 4.) God

deals often with the mother earth according as to whether her sons are righteous or wicked. The thought opens out the whole question of temporal punishments.

III. "It is better to walk in the flesh [holily] upon the earth, than by [wicked] desire, to walk under the earth: for everyone that covets earthly things contrary to his salvation, is under the earth: he places the earth above himself, and himself beneath it." (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. xiii. 9.)

*Epilogue.*—Jesus consecrated by His Incarnation our "nurse and mother" earth: it is hallowed by being taken into the nature of the Second Adam. How do we treat the body? As the temple of God? As the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost? Honour the body, ministering to it, in purity, care, and honour.

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## SERMON XLVI.

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

*Evening Lesson.*

### EXPERIENCE.

GEN. II. 17.

"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat."

*Introduction.*—"Surely also this tree was visible and bodily, as were the other trees. But why it had received this name is to be considered. It was not itself a tree harmful for food, nor would He who had made all things 'very

good' have placed anything evil in Paradise. The evil to man, lay in the transgression of the precept. But it was fitting that man, placed under the Lord God, should be prohibited from something; that to him there should be the virtue of serving his Lord, by that very obedience which is the one virtue of every rational creature working under the power of God. The tree itself was not evil, but it is called 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' because if, after the prohibition, man should eat of it, in it there was about to be a transgression of the precept, in which man might learn by the experiment of punishment (*per experimentum pœnæ*) what difference there might be between the good of obedience, and the evil of disobedience." (S. August. De Gen. ad. Lit. viii. c. 6.)

From the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" man gained the first recorded lesson which experience hath taught in the world. Experience is a great teacher, and by God's own appointment, man has to be taught by it, many saving lessons during his passage through this world. It is, says S. Paul, the result of patience (Rom. v. 4), often of long-continued sorrow and suffering, and yet it is appointed to become the mother of hope, as it is also the offspring of trial. (S. Chrysost. in loco.)

The lessons which experience teaches are—

- I. *General*—no exception is made for particular persons,

or for unusual circumstances. It is the same with the infringement of physical laws. The body is as liable to take a cold whilst on an errand of mercy, as on one of either profit or pleasure. It does not know how to make any allowance. It is a general and universal teacher, and it teaches general and universal lessons. Self-deception sometimes steps in, and seeks to persuade man to the contrary, but the end proves that the lesson is given without exception. Adam was God's first man ; he bore God's own image ; he was placed in God's Paradise ; to him was given an all but universal dominion ; but experience taught him that God's word was law, and that no exception would be made in favour of any one who might break it. Never let any one sin, and then hope to escape from the consequences of sin. Consider (Numb. xxxii. 23), and bring its appointed punishment home unto you. The lessons of experience are general, (*a*) As founded on God's general laws and commandments ; (*b*) As bringing a like and inevitable result to pass ; (*c*) As dealing with mankind as under the support and protection of one universal Father and Master.

- II. *Just*—stern and inexorably just, or else experience could not hold its place as a law in God's Kingdom ; it is

an expression of the teaching of Gal. vi. 7 of the law of retribution, that is as inexorable as it is just. The harvest which life will yield at its close, depends upon the service which was made at its beginning : upon the sowing of this life throughout, depends the eternal reaping for heaven or for hell. It is but right that holiness, self-denial, industry, and lovingkindness, and mercy, should receive their due recompense sooner or later : just as every form of sin will also receive its wages. Noting how the recompense strictly follows the work, we should be careful to profit by (a) Our own past experience ; (b) The experience of others ; (c) By both examples and by warnings.

- III. *Corrective*—for experience was intended by God both to confirm and to correct : to confirm what is good and holy, and to correct that which is sinful and weak. Little children are corrected by experience : from every fall or hurt, or small misfortune of their little lives, they learn some useful lesson of caution ; so should it be with men : their very sorrows and misfortunes should be to them so many profitable and saving lessons for the future. Any experience which leads to moral and spiritual reformation, can hardly be said to be too dearly bought, if it brings the soul to

the foot of the Cross, and the life to a state of earnest loving endeavour. Our care should be that this correction be accepted (*a*) Meekly, as being deserved ; (*b*) Thankfully, as being sent for our good ; (*c*) Docilely, as ready to accept and to act upon such truths as it may bring before us.

- iv. *Sweet*—for there is a sweet and blessed experience of “the good of obedience ;” of such as have tasted of the spiritual things of God (1 Peter ii. 3), and so have felt the favour and graciousness of the Lord. Every form of “well doing” brings a sweet experience with it : a trial of holiness has been made, and not found to be wanting. The lessons in which holy experience is so rich are sweet in (*a*) Past memories, of struggles, and of victories, and of the many tokens of love and grace, which have shed a soft and silvery light upon the days gone by ; (*b*) Present peace, consisting in the answer of a good conscience towards God : of one void of willing or of habitual offence towards God and man : a peace flowing from a sense of God’s abiding blessing ; (*c*) Future hope, since trial or experience is the nurse of hope ; and as in the days of small things we have found love, grace, and help given to us, so in the day of great things, may we well look for fuller and more abundant blessings.

*Indicia.*—I. Experience rests upon a solid foundation, upon the trials and facts of the past : opinion upon a mere fancy or prejudice, so the poet sings, "Opinion indeed is a great evil to men, but experience is the best thing" (Theog. Gno. 571), as it is incapable of any deceit. "The best thing," as being a guide both safe and easy to follow.

II. Experience is a great revealer : it clears up many a dark passage both in life and thought : it reveals a light, it may be distant and obscure, which is yet the goal to which it tends, "the end or purport shines through in experience, by which some one becomes more excellent" (Pind. Nem. Od. iii. 123-4), by marking the revelation.

III. Experience pertains to the lover of wisdom (Plato Rep. ix. 582 D.), it is he who treasures it up, reasons upon it, and turns it to its best account. The Christian, the lover of the highest wisdom, by experience gains in holiness.

IV. "Experience is the ground of knowledge, for the attributes of the soul are known by experimental knowledge, which shows by act the hidden principles, as the will is known by wishing, and life by the operations of life."

(S. Thomas Aqu. Summa 12<sup>o</sup> q. 1125 1<sup>m</sup>.)

*Epilogue.*—Be careful that experience produces its proper fruit. That it be rightly (a) Valued ; (b) Stored up in the soul ; (c) Acted upon in the time of need.

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## SERMON XLVII.

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**(Septuagesima Sunday.)***Alternate Evening Lesson.*

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**THE YOUNGER COPY.**

JOB XXXVIII. 4.

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth."

*Introduction.*—"For God foreseeing; inasmuch as He is God; that a good copy could never exist without a good exemplar; nor anything blameless of the objects of perception, unless it corresponds with the archetype, and intelligible idea; He having resolved to create this visible world (*kosmos*), first formed an intelligible image of it; that using this incorporeal, and most God-like exemplar, He might exactly form a bodily one; a younger copy (*νεώτερον ἀπεικόνισμα*) of the elder." (Philo. De Opifi Mund, § 4.)

So that the whole of this created world, or the universe itself, is but a "thought of God; and our world which is visible, but a "younger copy" of the world invisible, which reflects God's mind, for the writing by God's creative finger upon this copy is full of—

1. *Variety*—is infinitely varied in matter and form. God might have made the world such as man could live upon it and yet have created it uniform, ugly, and mean. But God ordained it in His tenderness and

love to be beautiful, and full of variety, so that the very contemplation of it might fill our souls with mental food and gladness. This natural world is varied in (*a*) Conformation, with land and water, hill and dale, moor, and forest, and fertile plain : a conformation so varied that no two places or scenes in the world are exactly alike ; (*b*) By the breakings up of time into days and nights and the several seasons ; (*c*) By the alternations of storm and sunshine, wind and calm. Why so? To develop different emotions in the soul of man, and to give a healthful and pleasing variety to his daily life.

- II. *Beauty*—full of beautiful sights, sounds, effects, which are so many indications of the beautiful mind whence they sprang, revealing, as they do, the beauty of (*a*) Order, and of law ; (*b*) Regular succession ; (*c*) Due obedience to the established constitution of things. Sin implies disobedience to “the reign of law,” therefore it is ugly, unharmonious, and repulsive.
- III. *Adaptation*—of means to end, in seasons, and in all things, setting forth the infinite wisdom of the great Artificer of all (Ps. civ. 24), before which the heart bows down in lowliness ; setting forth also God’s infinite tenderness and love towards all His creatures (Ps. cxlv. 9) ; so leading man to love and bless Him.

This adaptation is (*a*) Manifold; (*b*) Minute; (*c*) Exact.

- iv. *Perfection*—The more it is known the more perfect does it seem, upon minute examination proving itself to be but a shadow and reflection of that perfect mind which said (Isai. xlv. 7), as indicating the ultimate union in Himself of power and knowledge. The perfection of God is therefore reflected in His works, which, the more they are studied in a reverential spirit, reveal the infinite wisdom of God, whose perfection is seen therein in the (*a*) Simplicity of operation; (*b*) Complexity of structure; (*c*) Grandeur of design. Before this perfection of Him “with whom we have to do,” the mind should bow down itself in lowly, loving adoration.

*Indicia*.—1. Five phases of creation are described in Holy Scripture: (1) Before the ages, the immensity of the world was conceived in the Divine mind, which conception is called the Archetypal world (S. John i. 3, 4); (2) This sensible world was next created in matter (Eph. iii. 9; Eccus. xviii. 1); (3) The world in six days was formed by species and form (Gen. i. 31); (4) The propagation of each after its kind (Gen. i. 24), as it is said (S. John v. 17); (5) The renovation of the world (Rev. xxi. 4). (Honor. August. A.D. 1120, de Imag. Mun. c. 2.)

II. The Word, "having fitted together this world, and moreover man, the little world, the body and soul of him by the Holy Spirit." (S. Clem. Alex. Admon. ad Gen.) So that man is also a "younger copy" from the archetypal idea of the Word as yet unpronounced; (*endiathetos*) he fell; the Word became pronounced (*prophorikos*), became flesh, to furnish to this "little world," to man, another copy or example for this present life of his. (1 Pet. ii. 21.)

III. The prophet saw in his vision of the temple (Ezek. xl.) sculptured palm trees, etc., "That from these creatures the Creator might be understood, and all things running in order and reason might show the variety of the world, which amongst the Greeks received the name of *kosmos*, from its beauty" (S. Jerome in loco); even the very temple was to be, like the natural world, a reflection of the great maker and designer of all things.

IV. The world, the younger copy itself, "The creature," taken in its widest sense, does according to the Psalmist (Psalm xix. 3, 4) that which the Apostle (Rom. x. 18) attributes to the Gospel. "For the fabric of the world itself preaches or proclaims the Creator." (S. Amb. in Rom. x.) There are so many voices in the world (1 Cor. xiv. 10), and all of them speak in the clearest accents to pious ears of the glory and goodness of God.

*Epilogue.*—Each man is a part of the great whole, a unit of the universe ; a small world or microcosm in himself, a “younger copy” of God’s varied, beautiful adaptive and perfect mind. Shall this copy be defaced by sin? Nay, rather by divine grace shall it be restored to its former glory and beauty.

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SERMON XLVIII.

(*Septuagesima Sunday.*)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

THE MORNING STARS.

JOB xxxviii. 7.

“The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

*Introduction.*—“The disposition of the stars represents the economy and order of the righteous, and holy, and of those who keep the law and commandments of God : for the stars of the first magnitude and brilliancy are in imitation of the prophets, and those of another order of splendour are types of the people of the righteous.” (S. Theoph. ad Aucto ii. c. 15.) “The ‘morning stars’ are all the children of the church who by baptism are re-born to Christ. As the Apostle says, writing to the Church. (Gal. iii. 26, 27.)” (S. Jerome in loco.)

The “Synopsis Criticorum” gives some attributes of a

morning star, all of them being applicable to the faithful. They are—

- I. *Light-bearing*—"Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light," etc. The world is ever represented as a place of darkness. Think how very dark it was in knowledge of all kinds in the earlier ages: how rough, how cruel, how uncivilized. Mark how small a portion of it was the recipient of spiritual light. Welcome, thrice welcome, they who brought light to their fellow men: who cheered them in their gloom: who pointed out to them a better and a higher life: who set before them a good hope for the eternal future: and good and proper objects to occupy their hearts and hands in the present. The Christian is a "morning star," he is a son of God, he is a "light shining in a dark place." See then, O Christian soul, that thy light burn with a flame which is (*a*) Clear, undimmed by error; (*b*) Constant, never extinguished by sin; (*c*) Steady, not flickering from inconsistency, and falling away from grace.
- II. *Diligent*—as they who in the morning are up and active, fulfilling ever their appointed courses, never failing in the path of duty, (*a*) Contented to move in their own sphere and orbit, not seeking to shine in a sphere which does not belong to them; (*b*) Their

light, by their diligence, not hid under a bushel, but shining throughout the range of their world, in their homes, neighbourhood, etc. ; (c) Their lamps well filled with the oil of charity and good works.

- III. *Heralds*—of the full and perfect day of Jesus, “ shining more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.) “ As morning stars : shining until the Dayspring with His morning broom shall sweep these silver motes from heaven’s steel floor : ” the holy soul, as Lucifer, or light-bearing, precedes Aurora, the dawning of the eternal day of the Lord. The righteous are heralds of “ good things to come,” of the opening of a new and glorious daylight in the world, which is about to be fulfilled in due time. (Isaiah xi. 5, 10.) This morning star is a herald which is (a) Unfailing, as sure as the morning comes it shines : so let the faithful child of the Church seek by the shining of his good works to prepare for the day of God ; (b) True, it never shines in vain : as it shines, so the morning comes. No good thought, word, or deed, is ever lost, sooner or later its day shall follow ; it may have been thought out, or wrought, in great darkness or sorrow of soul, but the brightness of the day of joy is at hand ; (c) Vanishes with the daylight, like the life of the Christian. (1 Cor. xiii. 10.)

- iv. *Beacons*—pointing, by their examples, to Him, the True “Sun of Righteousness,” just as the morning star points to the direction whence the sun is about to arise, bringing many souls to the Dayspring by pointing out to them, as to their looking, (*a*) Where to look for Him in the sacraments and traditions of the Church ; (*b*) When, they are to look for Him when making the several acts of faith, obedience, communion : when fulfilling any righteous and holy work ; (*c*) How, by ever placing Him before their eyes, as their example, and as “the author and finisher of their faith.

*Indicia*.—I. “The star is of a fiery nature. Let us be, therefore, brethren, of a like nature, that that fire may be in us which the Lord came to send upon the earth (S. Luke xii. 49), which was as burning fire in the bones of Jeremiah. (Jer. xx. 9.) That it may be kindled in the foundry of our hearts, where the Lord sits purifying and cleansing the sons of Levi. (Mal. iii. 3.)” (S. Pet. Damiani. Ser. i. De Epiph.)

II. The star is bright and clear, so should we also be clear and bright : freed from sin, that the day may break to us full of joy and hope, and the shadows of sin and of sorrow flee away. (Canc. ii. 17.) That putting off the old man, with his deeds, we may put on the new man,” etc. (Coloss. iii. 9, 10), that as we have been darkness, so we may be light in the Lord,

(Eph. v. 8), putting on the armour of light, and walking honestly as in the day. (Rom. xiii. 12, 13.) (id.)

III. The star emits rays from itself : so should we emit the beams of good works. (S. Luke xii. 35, 36.) The light of our example burning, that so our light shining before men may disarm many. (S. Matt. vi. 16.) (id.)

IV. The star shines in the night, so should we shine in the night of this world (Philipp. ii. 15), (id.), for the baptized were anciently called the enlightened.

*Epilogue.*—May each child of grace become a star of the morning, a pioneer of good, a star of hope and joy, illuminating the sin and sorrow of the world. For the holy life points upwards to the new heaven and new earth, wherein for ever dwelleth righteousness.

## SERMON XLIX.

(*Sexagesima Sunday.*)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY.

GEN. III. 23.

“The Lord God sent him forth from the garden.”

*Introduction.*—“Mark how, under each of the things done by our Common Master, there was a purpose of philanthropy;

and how every kind of punishment is full of much goodness. For this expulsion was not only of philanthropy, and goodness, but was opposed to his settling in Paradise in order to produce perpetual grief; each day thinking over the things flown away, and into what a state he had brought himself. But, at the same time, if also the separation had ineffable grief, yet of no little profit is the occasion; and the continuing right, in relation to other things, was safer in respect to his not falling into the same things again."

(S. Chrysostom in Hom. xviii. in Gen.)

Adam by his expulsion from Paradise became a pupil in "the school of adversity," which is good for us all, since it—

1. *Hardens*—bracing up the powers of both mind and body. All toil, whether of mind or body, is a good. Every faculty becomes soft, and enervated by want of use. The legs all but refuse to carry those who are not accustomed to walk; the arms are weak of such as are not accustomed to toil. Exercise hardens every member of the body. In like manner by use, the powers of the mind are hardened, so that it becomes able to bear a long and continuous strain, under which, without such hardening, it would fail. Adversity hardens the affections, it makes the troubles and sorrows of life so much more easy to be borne; it does for the heart what the fire does for the iron,

hardening it into steel. Adversity teaches us to bear. In "the school of adversity" the lessons taught are (1) Hard to learn ; (2) Sharp to endure ; (3) Roughly taught to the unwilling pupils.

- ii. *Disciplines*—since it presents obstacles, to be overcome ; disappointments, to be endured ; a cross, to be carried ; teaching what it is to struggle, and to endure manfully ; to work a slow way upwards against all obstacles and discouragements ; from darkness into light. This very discipline in "the school of adversity" engenders a habit of mind which is (1) Resolute in endeavour ; (2) Enduring in opposition ; (3) Dependent upon God's grace, and self effort.
- iii. *Develops*—draws out latent power, and energy. Circumstances, requirements, epochs, bring out powers of body and mind, which, until they were needed, were not supposed to exist. "The school of adversity" develops the hitherto hidden graces of (1) Resignation ; (2) Faith (Job. xiii. 15) ; (3) Hope.
- iv. *Weans*—the affections from over-love of this present world, shewing that it is not a place of rest either to body or soul. That this world is, in fact, a school. School is not the end of life, but the means to an end in life, to be worked out afterwards. School teaches

certain lessons of industry, punctuality, endurance, quickness in working against time, and the like, and all these lessons contain the germs of certain habits, to be carried into the practical business of life by and bye. We are all glad to leave school when the time comes, to be free from its necessary discipline and restraint, and yet we are glad to have been to school, as that which we have passed through there has rendered us fitter to fight the battle of life. Adversity is a hard and rough teacher : its school is a grievous one : it bids us look up to another and a better state : it is good for us, we long to escape from it, but we shall reap the fruits of our pupilage in due course. (Heb. xii. 11.) Life is a school, as being a state of probation and preparation ; it is a "school of adversity," as being so full of pain, grief, sorrow, and sin. The fact of man being placed in such a school here on earth, gradually weans him from earth, and fixes his attention upon the higher and better world beyond the grave. It weans the affections  
 (a) Painfully, after many a pang ; (b) Slowly, the trees of earth cannot be wrenched asunder at once ;  
 (c) Surely, the operation must come sooner or later.

*Indicia.*—1. Adversity is a test of the spiritual state, for when it comes to the holy, they thank God for deeming them

worthy of chastisement, but the proud, sensual, etc., blaspheme and murmur against God, saying, "O God, what great sin have we committed that we should suffer such things?" (S. August. Ser. cxi. De Tem.)

II. Adversity is not an enemy, to be shunned, but rather as a faithful, though stern friend, to be courted. "Do you think that the unhappiness of the world is to be feared, and its happiness not to be dreaded? Truly no unhappiness dispirits him whom no happiness corrupts." (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. lxxxiii.)

III. Adversity, in as much as it begets many graces of the soul, is not to be spoken of as an evil, or as a thing indifferent, but as a good." (Origen ad Rom. iii.)

*Epilogue*—God is the "common Master" in this school of adversity. (Ps. xlii. 5.) In it, may we become pupils who are (a) Docile; (b) Willing; (c) Grateful, even for correction. (Heb. xii. 6.)

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## SERMON L.

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## NOAH'S WARNING.

GEN. VI. 19.

“Of every living thing, of all flesh, two of every sort shall thou bring into the ark.”

*Introduction.*—“Each one of those [Noah’s associates] beholding the righteous man building the ark, was able to learn the reason of its preparation ; then, the indignation of God having been learned, to come to a sense of their own sins, if they would ; but they gained nothing from what was done, not because they were not able, but because they were not willing to do so.” (S. Chrysost. Hom. xxiv. in Gen.)

This warning of Noah was really the voice of God speaking by means of His holy and faithful servant. Noah’s warning was God’s warning. The whole life of Noah was a solemn warning to the thoughtless, Godless people amongst whom he lived ; so was the building of the ark in particular. This warning was—

1. *Plain*—no mistaking Noah’s life, preaching, building of the ark ; it was plainly written upon his words and work. As then, by the preaching and life of holy Noah, God warned the unbelieving, thoughtless, sluggish men of his day, so now, by the plain state-

ments of Holy Scripture, by the teaching of His Church, by the guidings of His providence, He is ever warning men. Plain facts are the suddenness of death, the temporal punishment of sin, the uncertainty of all human things, the quickly failing powers of life. Plain words are the warnings and exhortations with which, from first to last, Holy Scripture abounds, and which are emphasized by the mouth of God's Priests. Yet do men live now, as they did in Noah's time, the plain warnings are as unheeded by these as they were by those. Why so? Unregenerate human nature is the same in every age of the world; it ever repeats itself. This warning was plain in its (a) Delivery; (b) Meaning; (c) Communication.

- II. *Practical*—he actively provided for that of which he preached. His was an example to be followed. There are some minds upon which example is unable to act: Noah's actions were a true test of, and a commentary upon, his faith. His words and actions failed alike to influence his fellows. As a rule, where words fail, example also fails. This our Blessed Lord taught us. (S. Luke xvi. 31.) A risen man would not touch hearts, who could read the words of Moses unmoved. Another lesson from this fact is, that Noah had no cause for self-reproach because men

did not follow him. The fault lay with those who hearkened not, and not with him. Do not be discouraged if your influence is small, if, with the best intentions, you fail to move the consciences of others.

- III. *Long*—no sudden message, he delivered it for one hundred and twenty years. Time enough for serious thought and action. Time makes no difference to hard hearts ; existence, true being, true doing, true suffering, is independent of time. Noah could hardly have done more than he did, and yet what he did do was wholly without effect upon those amongst whom he lived. Practical was his warning, for (a) He did what he preached ; (b) Its end and aim was practical ; (c) Its conditions of a holy life were practical too. The fault was not in Noah's message, whether twenty years, or ten times twenty, or twenty times twenty, it would have been with the same result. The very delay rendered the warning less (a) Fresh, as a new teaching, to arrest attention ; (b) Impressive, for a novelty takes for a time a certain hold upon the mind ; (c) Real, so often repeated, and nothing following it. " Could it really be true ? " was the prevailing thought, doubtless, in the hearers' minds.
- IV. *Wonderful*—never the like, heard of before or since ; and the fact that it was spoken in vain, proves that the

soul which will not receive simple lessons, does not care to believe in and to accept things wonderful. Therefore was the warning unheeded. Albeit it was wonderful in its (*a*) Solemnity, as the denunciation of sin, and the call to repentance must ever be; (*b*) Importance, as speaking of a judgment which was at the very door; (*c*) Delivery, consisting as it did of deed as well as of word. The building of the ark was a grave message in itself.

*Indicia.*—I. God's warning voice speaks in many ways, as can be learned by Holy Scripture: sometimes by His servants, as by Noah and the prophets; sometimes by Himself, in sound, or in vision. "When God indicates His will He is said to speak: the mind illumined by the Spirit of God is formed into words." (Origen. Hom. ii. in Gen.) The manner therefore of God's warnings is as manifold as their matter.

II. "God's voice is heard in the tranquil mind, resting from the work of the world; heard in the silence of the mind itself, when His precepts are considered. When the mind sleeps to external action, then does it more quickly receive God's words." (S. Odo of Cluny, A.D. 909, in Job. lib. xxiii.) They who are willing and waiting can often hear "the still, small voice," warning and pleading with the soul.

III. God's warnings cannot be either false or deceptive;

"He cannot lie," it is "truth from Heaven," a word with power, and yet without a form (Deut. iv. 12), (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. vi. c. 3), and therefore it must be both accepted by faith and acted upon in life.

iv. "God's warnings 'are light-giving' to the soul" (S. Clem. id.), teaching it to avoid the shoals and quicksands of the dark, deep sea of life.

*Epilogue.*—The rejection of "Noah's Warning" conveys a lesson to all time in reference to the things of God, to (a) Listen to them; (b) Accept and believe them; (c) Act upon them. Noah does not preach to us now, but sorrow, suffering, sudden deaths, and the like, are preachers no less stern and imperative than the mighty son of old.

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## SERMON LI.

(*Sexagesima Sunday.*)

*Evening Lesson.*

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### THE CRITICAL MOMENT.

GEN. VI. 13.

"The end of all flesh is come before me."

*Introduction.*—"What is this end [*καρπός*, critical moment]?" He says, 'I have shewn great long-suffering, great toleration, not being willing to bring on this very punishment which I am about to inflict.' But since there was so great

an excess amongst them of those who had sinned, which [large number of sinners] brought them to the same critical moment [or end]; it behoved Him to make an end [of them], and to stay their wickedness, lest it should proceed further."

(S. Chrysost. Hom. xxiv. in Gen.)

The Hebrew word [*kets*] signifies "the end," as being the extremity, the part cut off [*kats ats*] from space or time. In the life of every hardened sinner, there is "an end," "a critical moment," a final period, which comes before God, which is His "end" of—

1. *Waiting*—through long and weary days, and months, and years, for the sinner's repentance (Gen. vi. 3), "will not remain." (lxx. and Vulg.) "Such is our Lord: He often threatens, not that He may fulfil the threat in deed, but that, having corrected men, He may no longer have need to carry out the threat. For if He wished to punish why did He warn?" (S. Chrysost. in loco.) With the Jews, God waited for the repentance ere He gave them up into the enemy's hand. God waits for the soul, He waits to bring in "the critical moment," because He (*a*) Loves man so, and He would rather pardon than punish; (*b*) Hopes that man will reward His waiting by saving Him the necessity of punishing; (*c*) Feels for man: for all his infirmities, temptations, struggles,

and weaknesses. Let Him not wait for your soul, O sinner! in vain. Try Him not too much.

- II. *Mercies*—which being granted freely, yet fail to win over the heart to God, by their tokens of His love and care for the recipient. God draws the soul by the cords of a man, etc. (Hos. xi. 4.) All God's mercies are as silken threads: by which He would draw the soul to Himself. When God gives health, strength, happiness, etc., He is drawing that soul. Satan uses these very mercies to try and make men forget God. Think of God's temporal mercies, from the cradle until now, and ask, "Am I worthy still to receive them?" "Is the end of their continuance, 'the critical moment,' near?" The mercies which God bestows are (a) Infinite; (b) Long-continued; (c) Teaching.
- III. *Probation*—or trial, with opportunities for repentance, and means of grace, scattered with no niggard hand. Every day, hour, and minute of life is a season of probation, a time during which God is putting the soul on trial; the end must come, sooner or later, will "the critical moment" find the soul waiting upon God, and saying, "Lord, now lettest Thou," etc. (S. Luke ii. 29)? or will it find it hardened still and unrepentant: having exhausted its season of proba-

tion : waiting for its sentence "in relation to the other eternal state, for its cutting off from the portion of the righteous?" (S. Isodore, Ep. lib. i. Ep. 312.) Probation is (a) Limited, it only lasts through life (Eccles. xi. 3); the extent of its limitation is as uncertain as life itself; (b) Endowed with either eternal life or eternal death. Hence the promise to holiness (Rom. ii. 7); (c) Optional, it being in man's own power to turn either to everlasting glory or everlasting shame.

- iv. *Hope*—no further expectation of renewal of life. After "the critical moment" comes the dreadful time, when God leaves the sinner to his own devices, when His Spirit strives with him no more, and the deathlike calm and deep lethargy of sin is awakened by no inward pleadings of the higher life, but is left in undisturbed serenity until the final awaking to "the Second Death." An end of hope is a state like this, for hope implies (a) A desire for progress, for a going on to something better; and this can only exist when the soul is dissatisfied with itself; which it never is when God's Spirit leaves it to itself; (b) Some confidence in the past, upon which the hope must be founded; (c) A good and noble use of the present. Divine grace acting like a leaven

within, fulfils all these conditions : but when grace is withdrawn there is no longer any ground of hope.

*Indicia.*—I. There is “an end of all flesh,” which God ordains, accepts, and delights in ; “an end, which is an endless end, reserved for such as keep the commandments, and who live thereby blamelessly and wisely, through the knowledge of the Divine Will.” (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. ii. c. xxi. § 134.) A critical moment, when the reward and the crown will be secure for such as have lived and “striven lawfully” in the stadium of holiness. A blessed end, which cuts off all the sorrowful past, and opens a new beginning to endless life.

II. This “critical moment” “God has hidden, as God willed to conceal the time when may come the end of the world, and the end of life.” (S. August. de Pastor.) The two latter must come, and behoveth all to be prepared for them : the former will never come to those who have passed from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. With the holy, God’s Spirit strives more and more unto the end.

III. “The true end and ‘critical moment’ is not consumption, but perfection to the holy.” (S. August. Enarr. in Ps. iv.)

*Epilogue.*—Guard off this “critical moment” of condemnation by bringing forth the peaceable fruits of holiness :

that time may bring a blessing, not a terror, with it, and that when "the end" shall come, it may be full of glory and immortality; the "critical moment" is now, and toil, sorrow, humiliation, are for ever ended with it.

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SERMON LII.

(*Sexagesima Sunday.*)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

*INTENTION.*

GEN. VIII. 21.

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour."

*Introduction.*—"But not so with the ungrateful Jews. Wherefore? Hear the prophet saying (Isaiah i. 13), 'Incense is an abomination,' etc., as if showing the wickedness of the will of those offering it: just as here, the virtue of the just man made the smoke, and the smell, a perfume of fragrance. Wherefore I pray, that we should try in all things to manifest a right intention, for this is the source of all blessings: for our Good Master is wont to attend, not to the things themselves, which are done by us, but to the intention within, by which we are led to do these things, and looking at this, He either approves of the things which are done by us, or turns away from them."

(S. Chrysost. Hom. xxvii. in Gen.)

Right intention makes the offering, or the deed, to become

- I. *Hallowed*—it throws a glory over it, like the rays of the setting sun over the hill tops. From a pure spring flows pure water ; from a pure intention flows a pure offering, or deed. The reverse holds good : an evil intention defiles the best deeds, which, good in themselves, are not good to the doer of them. Right intention hallows action, (a) To God who knoweth the motives of all hearts ; (b) To the doer's own heart and conscience. All thought, word, and action, have a reflex action upon the person whence they spring ; (c) In relation to the deed itself, by imparting to it, (1) Sincerity and earnestness of purpose ; (2) The love which prompted its execution ; (3) The blessing which it was intended to convey.

- II. *Great*—be it ever so small (S. Mark xii. 42) ; it becomes great in respect to means, time, opportunity. (S. Luke xxi. 3.) “Wonderful deed ! She who constantly asked alms of others lends unto God, making even poverty itself fruitful to His honour. She therefore vanquishes the rest, and by a just sentence is crowned by God” (S. Cyril Alex. in loco), “More than they all.” Let no one refuse to do any good, or to make any offering, because he can neither do nor give much. The greatness of the deed, or offer-

ing, is relative, not absolute. Great results flow from the multiplication of small endeavours. Intention makes a small deed to become great in (a) Profit ; (b) Acceptance ; (c) Love.

- III. *Acceptable*—to God and man. Such were the offerings of Noah and S. Mary Magdalen. No real feeling is ever lost, or thrown away. Man cannot, like God, see into the heart, but he can often discern the motive, and where that motive seems to be good, the offering, let it be whatsoever it may, meets with a grateful acceptance from all who are deserving of any office of kindness. It is accepted, because it is an evidence of the desire on the part of the one who offers to (a) Help in another's trial ; (b) Sympathise in another's sorrow ; (c) Bear another's burden, and so to "fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi. 2.)
- IV. *Blessed*—in bringing its reward with it (S. Matt. x. 42), which is a certain peace and thankfulness of heart, which repays any sacrifice that one may make for another. The reward which blesses a right intention is (a) Innate, it is inseparable from, and forms part of the intention itself ; (b) Sufficient, filling the soul with a holy gladness at what God has enabled it to do ; (c) Independent, existing quite apart from any return which may be made by the recipient. Our Blessed

Lord's work on earth, so hard, so ungratefully received : so full, so very full, of toil, care, sorrow and suffering, carried its reward, that is, its blessings with it.

*Indicia.*—I. Intention is the eye of the mind, which, if it be good, its very operation will be full of light : whence a wise man said, "It is not greatly to be considered what anyone may do, but with what intention he may do it. Hence the Lord said, as to almsgiving, praying, and fasting (S. Matt. vi. 1, 5, 16.)" (Euseb. Gallic, A.D. 530, Ser. in fer. 4 Cin.) If the intention, then, be pure, the whole mind, or soul, is full of the light of holiness. (S. Matt. vi. 22.)

II. It is to be remembered that intention makes an action ; either good or bad. Cain and Phinehas were both homicides (Gen iv. 8 ; Numb. xxv. 8), one from envy, the other from a zeal for religion. Jacob pilfered a blessing (Gen. xxvii. 35), Achan some spoils from Jericho (Josh. vii. 19) : the one was blessed, and the other stoned. Saul spared Agag (1 Sam. xv. 8), and broke God's law : Samuel slew him, and obeyed it. (1 Sam. xv. 33.) (S. Anast. Sinaita, A.D. 561, Quæst. 60.)

III. "The action of right intention is truth of work ; and as the pure heart is free from dissimulation, so the intention does not err. Where there is no error, or simulation, or fiction, the intention is pure and simple, and love rests

therein." (M. Aurel. Cassiod. A.D. 514, Amic.) A right intention gives an earnestness and truth to all that it does.

iv. "An evil intention is a 'root of bitterness' springing up within the soul, producing bitter fruit, and the seeds of sin." (Remig. A.D. 880, in Heb. xii.)

*Epilogue.*—In all things seek that the motive may be (a) Pure, unmixed with any secondary thought whatsoever; (b) Clear, as in God's sight, bringing down a blessing upon it; (c) Strong, resting upon principle, upon faith and love, and not upon either inclination or mere feeling: founded upon the love of God.

### SERMON LIII.

(Quinquagesima Sunday.)

*Morning Lesson.*

### THE BOW OF SORROW.

GEN. IX. 13.

"I do set My bow in the cloud."

*Introduction.*—"This sign of the covenant is the sign of the Son of God. God made a covenant with man by His Son Christ dying upon the cross, reconciling us to Himself, Who (Rev. i. 5), and Who gave, by Him, to us the Holy Spirit of His love, by which we are regenerated (S. John iii.

5) in Holy Baptism. The blue and red of the bow signify the twofold baptism of water and of fire." (Rupert of Deutz, A.D. 1135, in loco.)

"It was not this bow which softened the eyes of God, but only because it was to Him a type of the divine sacrifice of Christ, of His body stained with blood, and livid with scourges; this is the true bow of many colours which appeased the anger of the Eternal Father." (Diez. Conc. Quadrup. Tom. i.)

Hence the Rainbow, transferred to the passion of the Lord, and from it to ourselves, becomes to us a type of sorrow. "The day of rain" (Ezek. i. 28) is "the day of sorrow." God's bow is sorrow sent by God, which is, like the bow—

1. *Beautiful*—beauty comes from the dark cloud and rain, but a greater moral beauty is born of sanctified sorrow. There is a beauty in suffering as well as in doing, in sorrow as well as in joy. As there is a real strength in weakness, so is there a beauty in sorrow which brings out, chastened and purified, the several graces of the Christian soul. (a) There is a beauty in the soul which, subdued and disciplined by sorrow, is brought into humble resignation to God's Holy will; (b) There is a beauty in the soul which, weaned by sorrow from the loves and ties of earth, flies

upwards for her rest to the bosom of Jesus, and bruised, and bleeding, seeks His loving arms ; (c) There is a beauty in the soul which, purified by sorrow, remains in ever-constant waiting for the summons of her Lord.

II. *Varied*—it is ever changing in colour, as sorrow brings out all our varied gifts and graces, forming of them new lights, sometimes showing us one grace, and sometimes another grace. (a) Bereavement, brings out the grace of resignation ; (b) The lapse into sin, brings “a repentance not to be repented of ;” (c) Disappointment, quickens the eye of faith to discern things which the worldly eye cannot see. Each form of sorrow has its corresponding grace. The “bow of sorrow” becomes the bow of mercy and of grace.

III. *Evanescent*—it turns to air again, as sorrow turns to joy. (Ps. xxx. 5.) If weeping endures for the night of this life, joy cometh in the morning of life eternal. The promise holds good (S. John xvi. 20) (Ps. cxxvi. 6) : weeping, with all hope of better things to come, going forth as an exile from the Father’s house, he shall return with joy (S. Luke xv. 25) into the place prepared for him. Sorrow or heaviness are very limited, and are destined to a final end ; but joy is

eternal. God's bow very soon changed its tints, and then faded altogether; once seen, its purpose was accomplished. So with sorrow, it is not an end, it is only a means to an end; it is not to last for any long time, but it is to be changed, lightened, and taken away as soon as God knows that its work upon the soul has been sufficient to (*a*) Atone somewhat for past sin; (*b*) To purify the heart; (*c*) To discipline and subdue the will, bringing it into conformity with the will of God.

- iv. *Consecrated*—being a pledge of God's gracious dealing, changing a curse into a blessing. (Heb. xii. 6.) Not a token of anger, but of loving discipline. Had there been no rain, no deluge, the rainbow would not have appeared; it was a sign of peace and covenant, but also a memorial of a great danger which was then passing away. So is sorrow consecrated (*a*) By the most bitter passion of the Lord; (*b*) By the humbling memories of past sin; (*c*) By the new hopes of grace and pardon which find a birthplace in the darkness of the stricken soul.

*Indicia.*—I. "Sorrow is the want of desire." (Anast. Sinaita. A.D. 561.) The paralysis of all its healthy cravings, the loss of all its longings and emotions. Disease which renders the system incapable of any proper activity might be called

the sorrow of the body. The body recovers its wonted health, and then its old powers return to it. In a very great sorrow, the soul loses alike a sense of either grief or joy, it becomes numbed and apathetic, or passionless. Sorrow may for a time stay the soul's life, that it will afterwards flow on with a purer and more even current.

II. Sorrow, the habit of a disturbed mind, may be (*a*) Of the world, when one grieves immoderately over the loss of things temporal (2 Cor. vii. 10); this sorrow worketh death; (*b*) Of repentance for past sin, which bringeth salvation; (*id.*) (*c*) Of compassion for the sufferings of others. "Who is weak and I am not weak?" (2 Cor. xi. 29; Jer. ix. 1); (*d*) Of yearning caused by the delay of coming to the heavenly country. (Ps. xlii. 2; cxxi. 5.) (S. Pet. Cælestin. Opus. I, 5.)

III. "Sorrow is a hindrance to the divine vision" (S. Jerome), since, like the rainbow, it shuts out for a time the view of the sun. When it disperses, the sun of hope, faith and love shines clearly once more.

IV. "The bow never appears except in cloud and water" (S. Jerome in Ezek. ii.), save when, out of the midst of the cloud of doubt, and the tears of sorrow and repentance, God is the more ready to reveal His mercy and His grace.

v. "Who does not see the Passion of Jesus Christ to be

a most true bow in the heaven?" (Alcasar.) The one great sorrow which forms the world's one hope.

*Epilogue.*—God's bow of love and mercy is often seen by the eye of the soul in sanctified sorrow. The sun of hope and immortality is ever shining bright behind the dark cloud of sorrow, soon to pierce it, as it breaks up into the rain of softening tears, and then the blessed rays irradiate once more the stricken heart. On its passing away, God's bow in the cloud becomes an earnest of that life of light wherein God shall wipe away all tears, and the days of mourning shall be for ever ended. In times of trial, (1) Seek for the vision of God's bow ; (2) Gaze on it in hope and faith ; it is

" The beam  
That points the way to heaven."

## SERMON LIV.

(Quinquagesima Sunday.)

*Evening Lesson.*

## C O W A R D I C E .

GEN. XII. 13.

" Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister."

*Introduction.*—" You see from these words into how great distress and cowardice this just man had fallen. And in no way was he troubled in mind, neither did he reflect and say,

‘What is this?’ ‘Are we forsaken?’ ‘Are we deceived?’ ‘Has our Master deprived us of His providence; He that said (Gen. xii. 2, 7)?’ ‘Has He now left us, that we should fear concerning the last things, and fall unto manifest danger?’ None of these things the just man admitted into his mind.” (S. Chrysost. Hom. xxxii. In Gen.)

Cowardice was the sad failing in the great and good Abraham; it is the ruin of many now. Moral cowardice is—

1. *Ignoble*—this craven fear imagines difficulties before they come to pass, and seeks basely to evade them. Cowardice is ignoble, as being not of nature, but of sin. Adam did not hide himself from God before he fell (Gen. iii. 8, 10.) Cain prevaricated through fear after his act of fratricide. (Gen. iv. 9.) The cowardice of S. Peter was but the action of the old nature (S. Matt. xxvi. 70, 72, 74), which grace had not as yet subdued. God demands courage of His servants (Ps. xxvii. 14), as a proof of the nobility of their nature. Physical cowardice, in a moment of danger, may be the result of a weak physical nature, but moral cowardice is the product of an ignoble and weak heart. Such ignoble cowardice on the part of Abraham was unworthy of a man to whom God had made such promises, and who lived in such habitual fear of, and faithfulness to, God.

- ii. *Deceitful*—"My sister" not a direct lie (Gen. xx. 12), still Abraham meant to (1) Conceal the truth; (2) Deceive the Egyptians; and (3) To trade upon his wife's beauty. Cowardice will resort to any subterfuge to save its own feelings, and this by an instinct such as Jacob had, who never, throughout the whole of his life, seemed to be able to play a truly manly part. The life of a coward is one perpetual series of evasions and excuses: (a) To God, for his falls from duty; (b) To his own conscience, from its violated laws; (c) To his fellow man, when he is detected.
- iii. *Faithless*—it ate out all Abraham's belief in God's promises. Not from want of will, but from want of firmness. How very many are led into sin, deadly sin, both of mind and of body, to be faithless to God, to others, and to themselves, because they are wanting in the moral courage to say "No," (a) At once; (b) Firmly; (c) Irrevocably.
- iv. *Weak*—it subdued him and deprived him of his manly bearing. It was so mean to try to use his wife, as he purposed to do. Nothing renders the soul more weak than for it to be afraid to assert its own lawful and proper independence. It becomes more and more enfeebled by each successive act which is done at the prompting of cowardice and fear. It sinks

down into a feeble spiritual and moral estate, under successive yieldings to a craven and cowardly spirit. For cowardice, like every other form of sin or of holiness, soon will become habitual, if allowed for a time to reign unhindered in the soul. This cowardice makes the soul weak in (*a*) Principle, eating out of it the distinction between right and wrong according to that high standard which is laid down for man's guidance in the divine ethics of the New Testament; (*b*) In resolution and purpose, the fear of consequences makes the timid prone to drift away rather than to guide their will and determinations. It hinders all high resolve; (*c*) When principle and resolution are both weak, what must be the nature of the actions which spring from them? The diseased parent can but produce an unhealthy offspring. Seek to be preserved from the weakness of fear.

*Indicia.*—I. "Fear is an expectation of evil about to be." (Plato Lach. 198. B.) In holy men, like Abraham and Jacob, it flows from an over-thought and care of the morrow, from a want of a strong daily trust in the tender mercy and providential care of the Father who is in heaven.

II. "Cowardice is a frightened submission of soul" (Theop. Chact. 26), by which it becomes the subject of a

tyrant which is strong, stern, and unrelenting ; it is the placing of the moral and spiritual nature under the hard and harsh rule of an alien power. All such tyranny is part of the heritage of the first Adam, and from it did the Second Adam come to deliver us, bringing liberty. (Gal. v. 1.)

III. "Cowardice is a defect of faith, and arises from an expectation of things unlooked for" (*inopinatarum*) (S. John Clim. A.D. 541, Scala Paradi. Grad. 21.) It is the special heritage of those who have no real hope for the future upon which to rest. Such a soul is ever "walking on in darkness," and doing so, is troubled by visions of future evil.

IV. "Cowardice seeks to shun every ill, lest it should have to pay any penalty." (Hon. Augustod. A.D. 1120, in Canct. c. 8.) It shrinks from any difficulty and danger in life, it longs for all things to go smoothly with it, then it rests in a fancied security.

V. "Always to fear is always to suffer." (S. Greg. Naz. Iamb. 721.) This is shown in the life of Jacob, who feared and suffered all his life long. It is they who, living in grace, are free from any cowardice either for this world or the next, who alone live here contentedly and thankfully.

*Epilogue.*—Mark well the issue of Abraham's cowardice : it led to (a) Detection of his subterfuge ; (b) To dismissal

from his present sojourning place ; (c) To the open and undisguised contempt of Abimelech and his whole court. Courage is one quality above others which God loves and honours. (Deut. xxxi. 6.) Note His charge to Joshua. (Josh. i. 6, 18.) Our blessed Lord warns His disciples against cowardice. (S. Luke xii. 9.)

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SERMON LV.

(Quinquagesima Sunday.)

*Alternate Evening Lesson.*

LOT'S CHOICE.

GEN. XIII. 12.

“ Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

*Introduction.*—“ Do you see Lot looking only at the nature of the land, and not regarding the wickedness of those who dwelt there ? For what is the profit, tell me, of land fertile and fruitful, when the inhabitants are wicked as to their way of life ; what loss will there be from solitude, and the poorest land, when the inhabitants are more suitable ? For the sum of all blessings is the good disposition of those who dwell therein ; but Lot looked at one thing only, the bearing quality of the land. Therefore the Scripture wishes to signify the wickedness of those dwelling there, ‘ But the men of Sodom,’ etc. (v. 13.)” (S. Chrysost. Hom. xxxiv. in Gen.)

Lot placed temporal good before everything else. He looked solely to earthly gain, and this choice of his was—

1. *A common one*—all are but too apt to place material things first, because all of us are wont to place the present before the future ; to take too much thought and care for the time which now is, to the neglect of the time which shall be. Present duties, occupations, cares, hopes, and fears, fill to the full both the lives and thoughts of very many ; (a) Material things are bound up with the present, they constitute the very factors of its being. Of our eternal future, whether for weal or for woe, we really know but little, but that little, distinctly teaches that it will be a spiritual state, not even marriage will be there (S. Matt. xxii. 30), much less material houses, lands, money, and the like ; (b) Again we can so clearly see, understand, and value things material, and so imperfectly and feebly conceive of, or comprehend, things spiritual, that it is no surprise that men commonly put the former before the latter. Once more ; (c) We are now in the body, having an animal life and organism ; we are materialists in our bodies, and therefore our natural sympathies must be enlisted on the side of things material. Our Blessed Lord was ever exhorting His disciples to reverse the world's judgment in

this matter, urging them to place spiritual things before things seen.

- II. *Worldly and seeming wise*—Lot was doubtless a good judge in worldly matters, for (S. Luke xvi. 8) he was a child of this world, the children of which, like the bats and the owls, can see in the night of this life, but not by the light of the heavenly Kingdom; words containing “the severest rebuke” (S. Cypr. Ep. lxxiii.), that worldlings should be more prudent and wise in sin, than His disciples were in holiness. This “worldly wisdom,” as it is called, which is “foolishness with God” (1 Cor. iii. 19), is very (*a*) Blind, so short-sighted that it can only see that which is just before it. Its vision is limited to the range of the passing present; (*b*) Shallow; no depth in it, either of faith, knowledge, or love. A surface wisdom without any real foundation upon which it can rest; (*c*) Weak to support or help when “destruction cometh as a whirlwind” (Prov. i. 27), therefore is “Lot’s choice” to be reprobated on the ground of the wisdom of it.
- III. *Godless*—good land was before God-fearing people, in Lot’s eyes, so that he placed sight before faith. Lot himself loved and feared God, but being somewhat of a materialist, he thought that he could serve God and dwell in mammon, give a double service, and gain a

double blessing, from God, and from the Sodomites. The Lord stated (S. Matt. vi. 24) "Two masters," for "they command opposite things." (Theophy.) A man cannot travel opposite roads at once, he cannot do a holy and a sinful thing at the same time. This opposition is (a) Direct and open ; (b) Irreconcilable and determined ; (c) Unequal, for God will, in the end, prevail. Lot was driven out.

- iv. *Fatal*—Lot lost his all in the destruction of Sodom, etc., his apparent worldly gain was really his worldly loss, and that no slight one, since he lost (a) His home ; endeared to him by many domestic and grateful recollections ; (b) His substance ; he grew rich in Sodom, he waxed poor in leaving it ; like many a man of the world, he enters it and leaves it in a like poverty (Job i. 21) ; (c) His wife ; thereby being bereaved in his affections. So that, as far as loss was concerned, in all ways, "Lot's Choice" was fatal to him. The whole of life is one long series of elections and choices either for God or against Him ; either for the good, the true, and the beautiful, or for the base and evil, the morally and spiritually false and ugly. This choice is a product of the freedom of the will.

*Indicia*.—1. "Conscience is the best in relation to accu-

rate choice and avoidance." (S. Clem. Alex. Strom. i. 1.) It is a still small voice which ever gives "the best" advice as to what we ought to choose, when God places before us varied circumstances in our lives for our trial.

II. "The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. x. 23.) "This refers to the carrying out of things elected, in which man can be hindered, whether he wills or wills not, but the elections themselves are in us, yet placed under divine help." (S. T. Aquin. Sum. 1<sup>a</sup>. q. 83 i. 4<sup>m</sup>.)

III. "The power of choice or election rests in the appetitive part of the soul, and when grace reigns there, then is a right choice made." (Id. 12<sup>o</sup>. q. 58. 2<sup>m</sup>.)

*Epilogue.*—Take warning from Lot ; choose not any one single thing with a view to the short and uncertain present only. Present loss is often future and eternal gain, whilst present gain but often represents future or eternal loss. Lot was short-sighted and unfaithful to God in cleaving so longingly to Sodom. Seek to fulfil literally (S. Matt. vi. 33), "For whosoever seeks spiritual things, to him shall be added bodily things, according to the liberality of God." (Theophy.)

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